

BROKEN PIECES AND SOUL SCARS OF
WOMEN: PATHWAYS TO A SHARED
MODEL OF HEALING

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ABSTRACT

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The context of this project is the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church located in Washington, D.C. The purpose of the project is to establish a model for women to pursue healing through a shared experience of specific pathways. The problem statement for the context is how women continue to deal with life while harboring inner hurts and wounds. The hypothesis is: if women participate in a focus group process of sharing, reflection and discovery; healing and community will take place. A qualitative research approach was utilized. Methods included work sessions, surveys, questionnaires, and activities to test various aspects of the hypothesis.

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rides, strength to lift bags and support. I would also like to thank Rev. Renee Few for her support.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Lucille S. Coleman, who has always supported me and expected the best out of me. I am so grateful for her constant prayers and love. I also dedicate this dissertation to my deceased maternal and paternal grandparents, Doctor W. and Lucy W. Green, and Lushion T. and Ella B. Coleman, whose presence helped to shape my life. I remember you with fondness and love. And to my father, Richard T. Coleman, I wish you were here to witness this. And to all of the young and older people in my family, I offer the message that you are never too old to learn and to heed God's call.

ABBREVIATIONS

APA	American Psychological Association
ESV	English Standard Version of the Bible
KJV	King James Version of the Bible
NBC	National Baptist Convention
NIV	New International Version of the Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
UTS	United Theological Seminary

Our goal is to create a beloved community, and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.

---Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

INTRODUCTION

Engagement in this Doctor of Ministry program has confirmed the presence of encouragement and empowerment throughout my life. I have always had a strong sense of connection to community, to family and to church. The church, an anchor, has always played an important and integral role in my life. I cannot think of the history of my life without church. Milestones are marked by church and church activities. As a child I was affirmed, encouraged and raised by the village in church. I know that the church is where we meet God and learn of God's ways. It is where we come face to face with our sin and brokenness. Most importantly, it is a place where we can be put back together again. Church is where we can be revived, rejuvenated, renewed and refreshed.

Women in my family have been role models. These were church women, faithful in their commitment. They were stoic, stern, and hard working women. Church was their space for social gathering as well as the place for spiritual formation. In spite of hardships and challenges, they persevered. I took note of all of the women I was around in church even during my early years. People's conditions are usually known in the community. Throughout my childhood and youth, I was aware of some of the situations in the lives of others. I was aware of the abuses, challenges and hardships with which they had to navigate. Yet, for all they went through, for the most part, these women did not wear their hurts outwardly. My interaction with women changed over time due to my own spiritual growth

and role changes within the church. I began to know of the broken pieces in women's lives not just as an observer, but as a confidant.

Women have shared with me throughout my life, in the community, in the family, at school and in church. Women shared their stories in school while completing the requirements for a Masters Degree in Organizational Development. Later, when working on a Master of Divinity Degree at Wesley Theological Seminary, women shared their stories, issues and concerns. Women shared on the job, strangers even shared on occasion. I have prayed for many, offered small advice when it seemed appropriate, and made referrals. I was never moved to do anything other than to listen and to become a hoarder of stories, which I held with all confidentiality.

However, it was during this tenure at United Theological Seminary while working on the Doctor of Ministry Degree that something began to take shape. A picture began to materialize from all of the encounters, conversations, prayers and discussions. A mission and a vision began to formalize. It became clear: the mission is to develop a systematic way to help women who are weighted down with hurts, women of the story. The vision is for these women to be healed through a process. The healing may not be all encompassing, but will introduce strategies for wholeness. Guided by revelations from my studies and assignments at UTS, I realized that God wanted me to do something tangible and practical. This specific project was declared for me, *Broken Pieces and Soul Scars of Women: Pathways to a Shared Journey of Healing*.

Experiences are the master teachers of our lives. Experiences may be ways in which God speaks to us through whispers or shouts as needed. If we are mindful, if we

are obedient, and if we are smart, we acknowledge the lessons we learn. We are brilliant when we aptly apply the learnings by putting them into practice. The project is born out of a deep searching of heart and hearing the voice of God speaking into my spirit. My spiritual autobiography, context analysis, and synergy papers provided me the opportunity to closely examine how ‘soul scars’ impact our being whether consciously or subconsciously.

The context of the project will be the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church located in Washington, D.C. The project will take place at the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church. A space that is safe and confidential in the church will be identified. The problem statement within the context, even all of society, is the issue that church women are burdened down with internal wounds to the heart and soul, which affect thoughts and subsequent behaviors and relationships. The hypothesis or thesis is: If project participants fully engage each other in a series of pathway sessions to gain understanding of inner hurts and soul scars and the impact on their lives, then mindful and transformative healing will take place.

I am introducing the term ‘*soul scars*’ into the literature. The definition of soul scars for this project is the residual effects of trauma one has endured, whether episodic or continuous, which hinder relational and spiritual growth. The scars promote broken pieces in the heart, mind, and body of the individual. While everyday functioning may be obtainable, bits of scars may keep the individual from total self-actualization, and from experiencing deep and meaningful relationships.

Invisible wounds to our souls, our psyche are often the result of emotional, mental, spiritual and physical abuses. These abuses produce scars of low self-esteem and self-worth, complexes, doubts and derisions, lack of trust, suspicions, bitterness, and unforgiveness. Much like visible scars from wounds but with a difference, soul scars cannot be seen with the naked eye right away. Outward scars often leave a mark, sometimes the mark is raised. It is called a keloid. Soul scars may also produce keloids. Keloids are raised places at the scar which is the growth of excess tissue.¹ It is as if the scar has produced another scar. Keloids are thought to be unattractive. Keloids from inner scars are also seen, but in a different manner. Soul scar keloids are revealed through the outward actions of behavior and personality. Soul scars prevent many Christian woman from developing a close relationship with God, with themselves and with others. Many are afraid to share their inner most hurts and experiences for fear of judgement and the residual effects of shame. These fears cause individuals to live in closeness and individuality.

Soul scars are produced by hurt from many different types of trauma. Some outward behaviors resulting from the residual effects of unresolved trauma are often manifested in promiscuity, behaviors manifested in anger, aggression, obesity, hyper sexuality, compulsive shopping, and pathological lying; to name a few. Awareness of how trauma effects self-esteem, self-worth, self-value, produces fears, anxieties, guilt or

¹ Keloids, defined as a thick scar resulting from excessive growth of fibrous tissue. Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed June 14 2018. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/keloid>.

shame may not be immediate. Many women think that they are alone in dealing with these emotions. Group settings may allow them to see that they are not alone.

Seven pathways will be used to journey from brokenness to wholeness. They are as follows: 1) Reframing: Self Image/Self Awareness and the Imago Dei; 2) Reflection: Examining Trauma induced Shame, Secrets and Memories; 3) Listening: Mindfulness; 4) Letting Go: Forgiveness, Self-Love; 5) I Am Yours, You Are Mine: Storytelling; 6) Service: Healing and Purpose; and 7) Completion: Wholeness and Community.

Journaling, discussions, and activities will support the sessions. Chapter 1 is the introduction to the project. Here the impetus for the project with an overview is provided. Chapter two focuses on the biblical foundations of the project. It presents how the Bible supports the study. The focus is found in the book of Luke, chapter 13:10 – 17. Here we find a woman who had been bent over for eighteen years and is healed by Jesus. Chapter three shows the historical relevance of the project. The life of Nannie Helen Burroughs, a member of the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, a clubwoman, social activist, early civil rights advocate and educator serves as the model. She was strong, dedicated and committed to the community. Chapter four presents the theological foundations argument for the project. Theological themes of salvation, woundedness and healing are investigated. Chapter five provides an interdisciplinary view of the problem and how other disciplines provide insight. Chapter six, the final chapter, presents the six weeks project and data collected from questionnaires, surveys and interviews. The findings will be analyzed and used to compare the hypothesis with the research. I contend, a new Beloved Community will be established. This community will consist of those

individuals who have dared to remove the masks, looked inside and challenged the scars and decided to do something and to move on.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

Many avenues lead to mental, emotional and physical hurts. Society, culture and religion play primary roles as the genesis for hurt in many. Men and women suffer physically, mentally and emotionally in their own ways. Hurts, burdens and scars are the results of societal, cultural and religious ills. The society is American, the culture is African American, and the religion is Protestant from a paternal perspective that is moral and spiritual. Legal systems keep women relegated to certain positions, impaled upon certain viewpoints, boxed into values and norms. While most do not see these systems as the cause of pain and suffering, women in America, especially African American women are the recipients of a multi-layered abuse system, regulated by a set of rules created to oppress.

The call to ministry is a serious one. Seeking to master one's calling to continue to grow and develop in that calling requires concerted effort. The journey on the path to the Doctor of Ministry has been one of revelation. The ministry skills and interests brought to this particular project are oriented in pastoral care. I have always had the sense of wanting to nurture people, of looking for the best in people and wanting to help them bring it out. Skills pertinent to the project include the skill of listening, of preparing curriculum and of facilitation and training and teaching. The ability of taking people from

one level to the next is also a skill. The next level for the women of Nineteenth Street Baptist who participate in this project will be of a better understanding of the self, and a greater enlightenment. A healthy self-relationship promotes a better relationship with others. We are never too old to learn and should be in a constant state of growth and development. The researcher is skillful in designing workshop curriculum and in conducting, leading workshops. Working in small groups through teaching is also a skill brought to the project. Professionally, having served as a corporate trainer on empowerment design teams has afforded me opportunities to see people engaged and reaching higher levels of understanding. As in all endeavors, one must have the proper tools to accomplish a task no matter how simple.

Additional tools that will not only serve me, but will also serve the project are found in the text, *The Dissertation Journey: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Writing, and Defending Your Dissertation, Second Edition* by Carol M. Roberts. The author lists six essentials that are a vital success along the dissertation journey. After contemplating on them I find that these tools are valuable life lessons not just for the dissertation. Therefore, I will incorporate them into the project. The tools listed are, “commitment, perseverance, stamina, a positive mental attitude, courage, and the spirit of adventure”¹.

¹ Carol Roberts, *The Dissertation Journey: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Writing and Defending your Dissertation* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2010), 13-16.

Context

My context is the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church located in Washington, DC, the Nation's Capital. The church is located in an urban city that is experiencing major gentrification. It is not located in the inner city or city center, but in a suburban like community of the city. The church has had the reputation of being a religious and cultural icon and a community celebrity in the city. Members once lived in close proximity to the church building. Now, they commute from distances as far away as thirty to fifty miles. The congregation is intergenerational. The membership is made up of individuals and families who have attended for generations. Known for being a silk stocking church, Nineteenth Street Baptist has been on the forefront of politics and social justice issues for decades. It is a church of community activism. It has been a leader among African American churches, a place where many cultural firsts were implemented. The membership is highly educated with professions in law, medicine, science, education, business, government, politics, health, and law enforcement. A historic church that has been in operation for one hundred and eighty years old; it serves as a beacon in the community.

Women have been a mainstay of this progressive church. They have supported her programs of outreach, education, evangelism, and other ministry efforts. I realized that home is where I should begin the project after assessing the church, which has a large female component. Women in the church are friendly, open and committed. Persons may be more familiar with those with whom they share in groups, such as choir members, or church school classes or other auxiliaries. Many are members of the same family or extended family. Some have had lifelong relationships beginning with elementary, middle

or high school. Yes, they are church people, and yes there are cliques. Persons may engage only certain people outside of the church. In other words, the church is a microcosm of society. Typically church people do not divulge as openly as one would think. So the need to begin to bring together small groups with the specific intent to provide a space for sharing is somewhat novel.

The church is a loving and welcoming church. She opens her arms to those who would come. The congregational size is considered medium. The community surrounding the church is becoming increasingly gentrified. Persons new to the area are moving in and may visit, but not remain. Creating a critical mass of persons who feel a deep kindred connection with the other is a way to sustain and grow a congregation. Creating this critical mass is an element of the vision I have for the church. It will start with small groups where love is seen and felt. In studying Robert's six essential tools and recognizing the practical use for me on this dissertation journey, it occurred to me that these tools would be beneficial for my ministry focus.

She suggests that *commitment* is the will to do whatever it takes to achieve the goal. A promise one makes to one's self to stick it out regardless of obstacles faced."² Not only am I to be committed to the project, but I am also to be committed to the participants in the project as well as the larger context, and to the outcomes. Roberts offers, "Making a commitment gives you that extra ounce of courage that keeps you going through the tough times."³ I have to draw water from the well of commitment throughout the journey.

² Carol Roberts, *The Dissertation Journey*, 13.

³ Carol Roberts, *The Dissertation Journey*, 14.

Robert's second inner essential is *perseverance*, which she defines as an attribute that impels you to go on resolutely, in spite of obstacles, criticism, adversity, fears, or tears. Perseverance is needed to help one overcome the inevitable discouragement and disappointment that accompanies mountainous-type projects. She writes, "Perseverance means staying the course even when you don't want to."⁴ One of my touchstones is perseverance. This essential has been a constant throughout my life. It was reassuring to see perseverance on the list. In looking around my context, it is evident that a group of people who began to assemble themselves at the height of slavery and still exists indeed have persevered.

Stamina is listed next for the essential tool box. Stamina is the strength to sustain long hours of work and yet maintain high performance. "Good nutrition, a good night's rest are vital to maintaining stamina", writes Roberts.⁵ Stamina may seem to be an oxymoron for the student who spends enormous times writing and studying and losing sleep. A positive mental attitude is listed as the next essential. She compares students who focus on the negative and difficulties and unpleasant times to the students who possess a positive mental attitude and look for the good even when it is hard to find.⁶ As participants engage the pathways, a positive mental attitude will be necessary to look for ways out of dark places. A children's book that came out in the 1930s, but has been revised several times, has always been a favorite of mine. It draws upon the same concept. *The Little Engine That Could* offers children and adults a look at how one begins

⁴ Carol Roberts, *The Dissertation Journey*, 17.

⁵ Carol Roberts, *The Dissertation Journey*, 15.

⁶ Carol Roberts, *The Dissertation Journey*, 15.

to believe in oneself in spite of and teaches the values of optimism and hard work. The story focuses on a train that is taking food and toys to children who are stuck on the other side of the mountain. Several engines turn down the job of leading the train, but one little engine seemingly unequipped due to its size offers to do the job. While chugging up the mountain side, it tells itself over and over, “I think I can”. A positive attitude, plus grit and determination, enables it to accomplish the task. What a marvelous illustration of a positive attitude in action.

Focus on the good in situations, even when it is hard to find will help to propel us forward, insists Roberts. She joins other gurus who extolls the benefits of having a positive attitude. These persons have encouraged, inspired and motivated us through the ages. Norman Vincent Peale has endorsed the power of positive thinking. His books, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, *The Positive Principal Today*, and *Enthusiasm Makes the Difference* reflect his thoughts on the benefits of positive thinking. Patricia Russell-McCloud, J.D, author and motivator of *A Is For Attitude: An Alphabet for Living* encourages the reader to become a “possibility thinker”⁷. Attitude, opines McCloud, determines altitude, how high one will fly in this life. Attitude, she asserts, is “Beyond mindset, for it encompasses your thoughts and actions. It determines how you respond to your environment, and why you say and do the things you do. It is an indication of your sensitivity on an issue or your blatant disregard. Simply put attitude is a choice.”⁸

⁷ Patricia Russell-McCloud, *A Is For Attitude: An Alphabet for Living* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2011), 1.

⁸ Patricia Russell-McCloud, *A Is For Attitude*, 10.

Courage is the fifth tool. Roberts states, “It takes courage to face the fears and doubts that often accompany writing a dissertation”⁹. She provides a list of fears and anxieties which allows an “in your face” look at them. Ironically, seeing them in print helps to release some of the tension. Commonly identified fears and anxieties include:

- The negative impact on work and family
- Not measuring up to the task intellectually
- Lack of the necessary research skills
- Not enough time to do everything that needs to be done
- Fear of the unknown – don’t know why they don’t know
- Won’t find an appropriate topic or an advisor
- Being overwhelmed
- Fear of criticism and committee rejections of their work
- Fear of failure
- Being emotionally vulnerable¹⁰

Naming anxieties, fears and worries helps to subdue their impact. Carol Roberts does provides strategies to overcome them during this journey. She gleaned this information from a group of students. Knowing that others have gone through and are going through facing the same fears and anxieties makes it better. I would also add we need God along for the ride. When we encounter these emotions, courage is enhanced and strengthened through prayer, faith and the Word of God. Throughout this process, I want to keep the list before me so that when the fear rears its ugly head; I want to be able to face it and

⁹ Carol Roberts, *The Dissertation Journey*, 15.

¹⁰ Carol Roberts, *The Dissertation Journey*, 16.

move on. I have learned that being in a cohort is encouraging and uplifting. Being among likeminded and understanding persons allow me to relieve some pressure, as members are a major support system for one another.

The final essential inner requirement Roberts provides is that of the *Spirit of Adventure*. The spirit of adventure is defined as an undertaking of danger and unknown risks and an exciting or remarkable experience. Again, the author exclaims, “It’s all about being willing to explore one’s own limits. Climbers must risk and face uncertainty”¹¹. Interesting, that we do not live life, every day, as the gift from God that God gives with the spirit of adventure.

Summarily, I have learned I will be challenged along this dissertation journey. There will be times that I may want to give up, times that I may feel dismayed, but if I follow the roadmap put forth by Carol Roberts, I will succeed. Internalizing and practicing the essential tools of commitment, perseverance, stamina, a positive mental attitude, courage, and a spirit of adventure, assures I am already half the way there. Additionally, I might add the importance of goals, beliefs, visualization, values and personal responsibility are useful tools to incorporate along this journey as well. I will utilize a system of questions to organize the details surrounding the revelations I experienced. This part of my ministry journey has been impacted by the past, present and future. I chose the words what, who, where, why and how as elements to guide my thoughts and formulate direction.

¹¹ Carol Roberts, *The Dissertation Journey*, 16.

Ministry Journey

The writing of my spiritual biography enabled me to remember certain incidents in my life that caused the emotional pain and scarring. Though I thought I had overcome the strain of these events, I have learned through this painful exercise that deep down underneath there remains a residue. This residue has impacted the way in which I live my life. Denial and shame, or maybe not denial, but silence has found a home in my psyche because of a teenage occurrence. I did not experience any violent abuse; however, my experience produced an aftermath nevertheless. My pain stems from teenage pregnancy. The shame was the result of feeling I had let many down, my mother and father, family, friends, the church, and God. I was ferreted away from home under the cloak of silence to complete school. I could not tell my closest friends. I could not talk to anyone. And though I lived with extended family, I felt estranged. I found myself in a strange place among strange people.

The shame planted itself into my heart where it was incubated and rooted deeply. When faced with the remembrance of the experience, the same emotions were present as if it were yesterday. Why had I not shared my story, even with those who may have benefited from my experiences? I encountered many young women in and out of the church who got pregnant young. Yet, I did not reveal to them that I knew what they were experiencing. I could have made it a mission to tell these young ladies that in spite of the situation it did not define who they were, but I remained silent. What I did tell them was that they needed a support system. I would tell them that dreams could still be realized, and that God still loved them. Many of them knew these things, but did not know that I spoke from experience. But, all these years later, a revelation occurred from writing the

critical book review of, *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insight from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education*, for the Spiritual Biography, and the Historical Contextual Analysis Paper. The revelation is that it is time. Once the question of what (sharing my experience) has been identified and answered, consideration can now be given to who. Who are the others that share the trauma of embodied hurt?

Synergy

The context and spiritual journey came together to form the proposed Doctor of Ministry project. As I began to explore the revelations from the spiritual journey, I appropriated them to members of the church. In light of my revelation, I began to think of all of my sisters and brothers; but sisters in particular who are walking around shackled by emotional pain. These women carry hidden scars they hope others cannot see. They hide the unseen scars caused by verbal and emotional and oppressive abuse. Still others carry the wounds and bruises produced by emotional wars, low self-esteem, and the lack of self-confidence, a lack of self-love; and self-hate. These scars produce a lack of trust and unforgiveness. Relationships suffer because of the heart hurts. Much of this emotional baggage may stem from childhood. Author, Margaret Kornfeld, writes on internalization, a process by which children take in the messages of their parents' words and actions. She writes about parents projecting their fears into their children. She writes in the text, *Cultivating Wholeness, A Guide to Care and Counseling in Faith*

Communities:

Children who grow up in a family system of fear are not really seen. They are underdeveloped. They are unknown to themselves. People who grow up in fear do not

know who they are meant to be. They have learned either to hate or not to see the best in themselves; their lively assertiveness, sexuality, and creativity”¹².

My profession is in the field of Human Services. My agency provides benefits to all those who are on the fringes of society, as well as persons who because of circumstances beyond their control are in need of assistance, either financial, medical or shelter/housing. Many persons who enter our system are victims of abuse. We are trained to look for signs. Referrals are made to other organizations and agencies who specialized in these areas, when necessary.

Pastoral care and counseling is a required course of study in the Master of Divinity program in which I was enrolled. Through case studies and field work we engaged the principles of watching over those in our care. We learned strategies to detect problems which may exist. Alerts came by way of body language, words, facial expressions, actions or behaviors. We learned ways to recognize the signs of silent suffering. Soul care that is not intrusive unless the immediacy of the situation calls for it; soul care listens; and soul care offers the arm of support gently and gradually. Pastoral care and counseling emphasizes the need to make referrals when help is outside of the scope of one’s professional training. This process enabled me to realize what is needed and who needs it and where it is needed.

It became clear that the church, the local church, my church context is where the project needed to take place. Simply because the church is home, and women are in the church. And because I have a desire to see my sisters whole. This project is an attempt to birth a cell group, made up of persons who chose to take a risk and remove the mask.

¹² Margaret Kornfeld, *Cultivating Wholeness: A Guide to Care and Counseling in Faith Communities* (New York, NY: Coninium, 2009), 31.

Once bared, these persons may be used as instruments to bring others around, ultimately creating a critical mass of enlightenment right in the church. However, a process should be established. First, we must acknowledge that we are hurting. Secondly, we must go through a process to deal with the hurt. Thirdly, we must desire and seek healing. And finally we must share our experience with others. God is a healer. There is healing for our souls and for our spirit. Richard Smallwood, gospel music artist, singer and composer sings of this healing in the words of the song, Healing.

Know that God is nigh. Stand still and look up
 God is going to show up. He is standing by.
 There's healing for your sorrow. Healing for your pain.
 Healing for your spirit. There's shelter from the rain.
 Lord send the healing. For this we know.
 There is a balm in Gilead. For there's a balm in Gilead.
 There is a balm in Gilead. To heal the sin sick soul.
 Healing for the soul.¹³

Why do we need to be healed? Jesus stated, “Come unto to me all who are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” Masking equates to lying, masking hides the true self. Scripture informs us that we are not to lie to one another. The writer of Colossians 3:9-12, admonishes us, “Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”(NRSV)¹⁴ Letting go of past hurts, unveiling our faces, being released from hindrances frees us to concentrate on God. We find in Corinthians 3:18, this text attributed to the Apostle Paul, “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate

¹³ Richard Lee Smallwood, *Healing: Live in Detroit* (Detroit, MI: Universal Music Publishing Group, 1999).

¹⁴ Colossians 3:9-12, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this document are from the NRSV.

the LORD's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the LORD, who is the Spirit.” God is calling us to transformation.

We are all in community. Even when we are not connected, we are in community based on likeness, sameness, or identification. Even abashed loners may be said to be in community, the community of loners. They may not have contact, but they share a commonality. Connection is the importance of community whether abstract or real. We are in the community of human beings. This project will connect persons in ways that they have never been connected before. God calls us to community. Kingdom building is about building community. Author Margaret Kornfeld, states “true community is given by grace, but at the same time requires upkeep.”¹⁵ The desire to belong may be innate for most people.

We hunger for community, for connectedness, and for the love that comes with true community. Communities are formed around common purposes and goals. Jesus called twelve disciples who formed a community of His inner circle. The bible tells of three thousand persons who were saved by the preached word. We find in the book of Acts 2:41-47 these persons became a community of believers, they spent time together in the temple, ate at each other's homes, praised God together and had goodwill for each other (NSRV).

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove expresses the value of community. Wilson-Hartgrove shares his personal experience of living in an intentional community in the essay, *Living*

¹⁵ Margaret Kornfeld, *Cultivating Wholeness*, 34.

As Community.¹⁶ Wilson-Hartgrove's model for intentional community is based on the Biblical Acts 2 church. The community is made up of some nine to ten members; men, women and children, and they strive to live as a new monastic community in two houses. He affirms, that for him, "The best thing about the community is knowing that there are people who love you, even though they really know you, and the worst part is trying to love all those other people, even though you know them."¹⁷ In his book, *Life Together: A Discussion of Christian Fellowship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, writes of living in a community of twenty-five vicars in emergency housing, and extols the blessings of those who are able to live in fellowship with one another.¹⁸ While we may not live intentionally as Wilson-Hartgrove and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, we are in community, and we are required to love one another.

Jesus holds us accountable to one another. When asked what the greatest commandment is, his response was, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" Matthew 22:36 – 49, NRSV. What Jesus is talking about are relationships. The love of God and neighbor as self connects us. We are then mutually connected through this love. The Webster dictionary states mutuality involves regard to the other, having the same feelings one for

¹⁶ Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, "Living in Community," in *On Our Way: Christian Practices for Living a Whole Life*, ed. Dorothy C Bass and Susan R Briebl (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2010), 53 – 70.

¹⁷ Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, "Living in Community", 65.

¹⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: A Discussion of Christian Fellowship* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1954), 18-19.

the other or “a sharing of sentiments”¹⁹. Author Judith Jordan writes of the importance of mutuality. She states there are few psychological or clinical theories that do not acknowledge in some way the importance of relationships to individual development. Judith Jordan writes on the mutuality of connection, “Relational mutuality can provide purpose and meaning in people’s lives, while lack of mutuality can adversely affect self-esteem”²⁰. Maturity is a key factor in the mutuality equation, just as it is a characteristic for understanding the sense of unity spoken of by the Apostle Paul in his admonishment to the church at Ephesus. Jordan espouses certain requirements necessary for a mature connection:

Crucial to a mature sense of mutuality is an appreciation of the wholeness of the other person, with a special awareness of the other’s subjective experience. Thus, the other person is not merely to take care of one’s needs, to become a vessel for one’s projections or transferences, or tot the object of discharge of instinctual impulses. Through empathy, and an active interest in the other as a different, complex person, one develops the capacity at first to allow the other’s differentness and ultimately to value and encourage those qualities that make that person different and unique.²¹

Empathy and concern are imperative components of mutuality in relationship. Jordan continues, “When empathy and concern flow both ways, there is an intense affirmation of the self and, paradoxically, a transcendence of the self, a sense of the self as part of a larger relational unit. The interaction allow for a relaxation of the sense of separateness; the other’s well-being becomes as important as one’s own”²².

¹⁹ Webster’s II Dictionary, 3rd ed., (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005), 471.

²⁰ Judith Jordan, “The Meaning of Mutuality” in *Women’s Growth in Connection: Writings From the Stone Center* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 1991), 81 – 96.

²¹ Judith Jordan, “The Meaning of Mutuality”, 82.

²² Judith Jordan, “The Meaning of Mutuality”, 82.

As I consider Jesus' response on the greatest and second to the greatest commandment, I am persuaded that when we began to see the other's well-being as important as our own, then we can begin to forge a collaborative way to get to the other side of suffering. How will we collaborate to get to the other side of the suffering is the inspirational engine of the project.

How involves the design and implementation of the project (fragment, restate).

Some components of the action research method will be used. Bob Dick, is an Australian educator, facilitator and consultant who has done extensive work on action research. He affirms that systematic and critical reflection are necessary components to action research. Dick offers this explanation for action research:

Action research is a flexible spiral process which allows action (change, improvement) and research (understanding, knowledge) to be achieved at the same time. The understanding allows more informed change and at the same time is informed by that change. People affected by the change are usually involved in the action research. This allows understanding to be widely shared and the change to be pursued with commitment.²³

Dick says that action research fits the action and the research. Both action and research alternate in a tight cycle. In each cycle there is an action and critical reflection. During reflection people first examine what happened previously, they "review." They then decide what to do next, they "plan."²⁴ This project will ask participants to review past experiences, events, situations and then to critically reflect upon them. The critical reflection should allow for open and transparent assessments. Utilizing Dick's theory we will complete cycle by developing actions, in this case, strategies. These strategies will be

²³ Bob Dick, "Action Research: Action and Research", 2002, accessed September 10, 2019, www.aral.com.au/actionresearch.

²⁴ Bob Dick, "Action Research: Action and Research"

action plans for healing. Finally, the participants will develop plans based on the strategies to implement and practice the pathways to healing.

Conclusion

The statement or theme of this project is: Broken Pieces and Soul Scars of Women: Pathways to a Shared Model of Healing. The need for healing from inner wounds, soul scars, or heart pain is a universal one for people. This need exists regardless of socioeconomic status, race, gender or age, or sexual orientation. However, the population for this project is women and women in the church. The context may be any church, organization, club, work environment or entity where there are people. The church has been called a hospital for the sick; the sick in mind, body, and soul. The need within the context is for an intentional process to address issues related to pain and trauma. The need is for a space for women to come together in a group environment where they feel safe to discuss past or present hurts. The need is for the healing of these hurts to take place so that love of self and neighbor is realized.

This project will be replicable in churches, clubs, and groups. Hurts are not relegated to women; men also experience hurts. However, most societies hinder men from sharing pain. Yet, hindered pain manifests into certain behaviors regardless of gender. The project is designed on biblical principles and therefore an excellent resource for churches. Pastors, ministers, lay-leaders, those who engage persons one on one, or persons who lead group ministries may begin to consider the total needs of persons. This project may be utilized by individuals or groups. Research for this project indicates the connectedness and integration of mind, body, and soul. The church must begin to address

this connection as related to spiritual formation, pastoral care, and growth. The whole person is in need of care.

Church leaders must consider that there are needs in the congregation that are not being met. Information may be collected through surveys, questionnaires or other means in order to determine if there are needs, what they are and how persons would like them addressed. Secondly, the ground must be plowed with messages through the preached word. Trust and love and non-judgement should be taught to members repeatedly. Thirdly, once the environment has been set and there is a receptivity to growth teaching may begin. That teaching may be through small group sessions like this project, or seminars, or gatherings where the need for wholeness is expressed in an intentional and focused way.

The fourth idea is that members are to be held accountable for their actions and behaviors toward one another. Acting in ways that do not reflect the love of God to one another should not be tolerated in the church. Persons who bear pain may not reflect the love of God toward neighbor. The fifth aspect is that our journey must be a shared journey. The project stresses the shared aspect of the model. Support emanates from a shared environment. It is through sharing, of being together, that persons are supported. Finally, confidentiality must be stressed in a shared model of healing. Persons should be able to share with trust that what they have shared will not be conveyed to others. The time for sharing is at the discretion of the person sharing. The bible encourages us to go to a brother or sister to confess sins, or to settle a disagreement; and we know that this requires maturity. There is a saying that hurt people hurt people. Sandra D. Wilson has written a book with this title. She focuses on myths surrounding Christians and hurt.

Many support the notion that Christians are supposed to be wound proof. She rebounds with the question, “Where do intelligent adults get the idea that any human being ought to be able to take everything without feeling anything?”²⁵ We must acknowledge that Christians are hurting and that we can and must do something about it.

²⁵ Sandra D. Wilson, *Hurt People Hurt People: Hope and Healing for Yourself and Your Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 2001), 8.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Reflection, study and prayer on the ministry context revealed that God is constantly attuned to the needs of his people. Further discernment provide insight into the particular needs of the people. As we traverse the journey of Christian life, we are being renewed daily. God is ever providing ways to grow his children. The premise or foci for this chapter is based on the assumption that men, but particularly women, carry burdens, sickness, disease, emotional stress manifested into physical conditions in their inner selves for years and need healing. These burdens may manifest themselves as physical, mental, and emotional diseases and disabilities. Many of these women are ‘church women or church ladies’ who have not been able to find a safe space to share these burdens. Unresolved suppressed issues become buried weights of shame. These weights are carried for lack of places to set them down. While there are congregations where persons do share, most of our congregations are not places of sacred space. Many are still places of judgement, whether intentionally or because of a lack of understanding. Fear hinders persons from sharing in risky places. Fear of backlash and perception, and fear of isolation, and even fear of being shunned are detriments. So these burden bearers hide their pain and immerse themselves into the life of the church.

The argument is that God desires wholeness and healing for his people. The argument is that salvation, the acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior does not exempt

one from suffering. God's people still experience oppression and abuse; and therefore need ongoing treatment and help throughout their lives. Suffering of one kind or another seems to be built into the fabric of life. Yet, God has expressed the desire for wholeness through healing, forgiveness and reconciliation through the written Word. For the sake of this thesis, wholeness is emotional, physical and mental balance. The theory is that if any part is out of sync, we are unbalanced. If I am physically fit, exercise every day, eats a healthy diet, but have unforgiveness and bitterness in my heart, I am not whole. Different words are used in various translations to denote wholeness. Some of them are well, healed, cured, and whole. Jesus asked the man laying at the pool of Bethesda, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" (Jn. 5:6, NKJV) This text does not reveal that the man had a physical problem although he had been laying there for some time. It does state that the man felt as if someone had to help him to get up. Ironically, Jesus asked him if he wanted, (some texts read desired) to be made whole?

There are many reasons for the scarring of the soul. Some have been physically, emotionally, mentally and verbally abused. Many are scarred by a society that constantly and relentlessly mocks and delineates them because of skin color, hair texture, and body build, i.e. race. The constant stress of living in a racist, prejudiced and oppressed society creates residual trauma. Many assume the inner demons are a way of life, and are not aware they are suffering from trauma. Post-traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD) is a disorder that develops in some people who have experienced a shocking, scary, or dangerous event. It is natural to feel afraid during and after a traumatic situation.

Nearly everyone will experience a range of reactions after trauma; yet most people recover from initial symptoms naturally. Faced with ongoing trauma may produce a Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD) condition. People who have PTSD may feel

stressed or frightened even when they are not in danger. People of color who live in an oppressive society face trauma daily. An individual may not even be aware they are suffering extreme stress because of survival and coping skills learned over time. Women, especially those in the African American community, are often the bearers of all of the lack that exist in the society. The black woman is a descendant of ancestors who were most likely victims of the racist ideology of chattel slavery. Overall, her socioeconomic status (SES) is still the lowest in America.

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines the socioeconomic status as “the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation. Examinations of socioeconomic status often reveal inequities in access to resources, plus issues related to privilege, power and control.”¹ SES is a consistent and reliable predictor of a vast array of outcomes across the life span, including physical and psychological health. Access to health care, quality education, and the ability to improve one’s social standings, advocacy, are all impacted; especially among the marginalized. Statistics may be obtained on the APA website. Because we are the result of years and years of stress, we turn it inward onto ourselves and each other. It is the double bind of being oppressed from the outside and repressed from the inside.

Historically, Nineteenth Street Baptist is a giving church. Benevolence is a high priority for persons inside and outside the church. A member of the church will never be without necessities, or go lacking. While these needs may be met, there are underlying

¹ American Psychological Association, “Socioeconomic Status” last modified, 2019, accessed May 27, 2019, <http://www.apa.org/topics/socioeconomic-status>.

needs that need attending. The vision is that the church will become a place where healing, wellness, wholeness occurs. And, the church is a safe space for sharing. A place where the telling of stories will bring about transformation and empowerment. This sacred space will be an environment of nonjudgement and will produce bridge builders of a Beloved Community. The vision is of a church where spiritual formation, continued spiritual growth through a healing ministry is at the heart.

New Testament

The New Testament passage is from the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 13: 10 – 17, NRSV. The periscope details the story of a woman who has been physically, mentally and emotionally bound, bent over for some eighteen years. One day she encounters Jesus. This encounter brings about some immediate and startling changes in the woman's life. She has been crippled with a disease that has caused her to walk bent over for decades. Her body is stooped at a forty-five degree angle. As we enter into her story, she is visiting the local synagogue on the Sabbath. Jesus just happens to be teaching that day. The Scripture found in the New Revised Standard Version reads.

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the Sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the Sabbath day." But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? *And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, to be set free from this bondage on the*

Sabbath day?” When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.²

This passage of scripture provides insight into several biblical foundational principles regarding healing, restoration, God’s authority, Jesus’ compassion, the human condition and the true meaning of religion. These elements provide biblical support for the thesis and will serve as a guide for the project. This text will be taught to the people to encourage them to discern and name their hurts. An honest desire for healing will also be encouraged. One of the keys to healing is the knowledge that Jesus wants to help us no matter what the world says, or even what some in the church may say. What we see happening in Luke with the bent over women is considered to be a miracle.

The word miracle is defined as a surprising welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency as stated in the Webster Online Dictionary. Synonyms, words that may reflect the same meaning of the word miracle are wonder, marvel, sensation, phenomenon, supernatural phenomenon or mystery. It is something that is so compellingly extraordinary and equally just as ordinary. A miracle is something that is seen as only done by divine intervention or as a result of God’s gifting in individuals, groups, places, or things. Jesus heals not only physical infirmities, but he heals the brokenness of spirit and heart and soul. There is debate as to whether miracles have ceased in the dispensation of grace. Miracles were fundamental to the early church. Many have argued against the miracles, and seek reason and intellect to describe the details and effects.

² The quote used here from the NRSV has the approval of the copyright as stated, “The NRSV text may be quoted and/or reprinted up to and inclusive of five hundred (500) verses without the express written permission of the publisher, provided the verses quoted do not amount to a complete book of the Bible or account for 50 percent of the written text of the total work in which they are quoted.”

On the other hand, I believe that miracles continue to happen today by God's grace. Miracles may be expressed differently. Jesus heals the woman with the spirit of infirmity. She stands straight, physically. What does this do for her emotional and mental health? I believe that Jesus heals the entire being. A woman goes into the hospital and has surgery performed on her back, perhaps a rod is installed in her body, perhaps disc are fused together and she is able to stand up straight, is that not a miracle. We might say no, it was a successful operation, but a God fearing person would know that God's hand was present in the operating room. We rationalize many happenings in nature, and leave God out of them. The religious leader applied reason to the situation and did not consider the need of the other.

Fundamentally, the bible is about God. It is about a God who speaks, a God who reveals, and a God who acts. The God of the bible is a relational God. He is in relationship with His creation, the heavens and the earth and humankind. God does not desire to be in just any kind of relationship with humankind. God wanted to be in right relationship. The bible tells us that in the beginning God was in a special relationship with his human creation. But, this relationship was marred by disobedience and willfulness. The marring separated the human creation spiritually and relationally from God. However, God still wanted to have this right relationship and sought to restore and mend the breach. Restoration of the relationship came at a heavy price. One that required forgiveness, redemption, and healing through sacrifice. The overarching process is called salvation.

The biblical foundation for the project rests upon the gift of salvation, specifically God's desire for us to be whole. We are told that God made man in His image (Genesis

1:26 – 29). God did not make man and subsequently woman to be in the throes of chaos and darkness. The brokenness experienced as a result of separation can be restored. The wrong can be made right through love, forgiveness, redemption and transformation. Jesus sacrificed his life we are told in order that mankind could be restored to right relationship with God. Therefore, all who believe and accept this, who adapt the ways and thoughts of Jesus are through faith restored and redeemed back to God. Broken pieces can metaphorically be molded back together. New shapes and purposes may be obtained through transformation.

The writer of Jeremiah shows how God used the potter's work with clay as a reference to God's own work with his people.

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message." So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the LORD came to me. He said, "Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel. (Jer. 18:1 – 6, NIV)

Many of us need to be reshaped. Life's experiences, trauma related hurts and wounds have broken us. We are not at peace in our souls. The importance of scripture is the lessons they provide for us to live by. Even though the time and context is different, the content breathe on by the Holy Spirit is still very relevant. There are several methods to approach scripture in order to interpret the meaning of it for our lives.

We learn to interpret the bible properly when we learn to ask the right questions of the text; and even then we may misunderstand. Similar to how an investigator approaches a crime scene, it is not just what he or she sees or uncovers, but what is not seen as revealed through the right questions.

Biblical interpretation is defined as a science and the rules it uses take time, energy, and a serious commitment to learn. The primary rule of biblical interpretation is “context.” One must let a passage speak for itself within the context of the paragraph, chapter, or book. Interpreting the bible correctly demands that we listen to what the text is saying, and then draw the meaning out of the passage. Exegesis is a Greek preposition meaning “out of”. Exegesis is the act of critically interpreting a text in an attempt to “draw the meaning out” of the text. According to *Nelson’s Illustrated Dictionary*, The Four Stages of Biblical Interpretation are 1) Observation, 2) Interpretation, 3) Evaluation, and 4) Application.³ A brief overview of each are as follows: Observation: Do I understand the basic facts of the passage such as the meaning of all the words? Interpretation: What did the author mean in his own historical setting? Evaluation: What does this passage mean in today’s culture? Application: How can I apply what I have learned to how I live my life? As has been emphasized we cannot totally dismiss our own bias and subjectivity. Our interpretation will always be colored by our culture, our opinion about the passage, or our theological beliefs.

The centrality of a good exegesis according to the authors of the classic, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 4th Edition, is to learn to read the text carefully and to ask the right questions of the text. The reader is told to “Read with your eyes open.”⁴ This model emphasis asking questions of *context* and *content* of every biblical passage. Per Fee and Stuart, “Contextual questions are centered on the historical and literary

³ Ronald F. Youngblood, Herbert Lockyer, Sr., F.F. Bruce and R.K. Harrison, eds., *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary, New and Enhanced edition* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2014), 170 – 174.

⁴ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 4th Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 31.

aspects of the texts. Historical context questions the difference from book to book as it relates to the time and culture of the author and audience. Geographical, topographical and political factors relevant to the author's setting are to be considered.”⁵

Fee and Stuart explain the importance of content analysis. “The starting point is the true meaning of the biblical text as God intended it when first spoken or written.”⁶ Interpreters and translators take into account the original languages when analyzing content. These persons have made this their life's work and professions. For the academic scholar and lay person, relying on accredited resources is all that is available to us. The original manuscripts, scrolls, etc. are not at the disposal to the average person. There are many methods of biblical inquiry.

Martha J. Simmons suggests that texts should be approached through a hermeneutical lens.⁷ Thomas Long's framework consists of five stages.⁸ Long's five stages are 1) Getting the text in view, 2) Getting introduced to the text, 3) Attending to the text, 4) Testing what is heard in the text, and 5) Moving toward the sermon. Each section comes with a list of instructions. For example, under the heading, *attending to the text*, the preacher, student, researcher is told to “listen attentively to the text.”⁹ For Richard Osmer, Princeton Theological Seminary's Professor of Mission and Evangelism, and

⁵Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 4th ed., 34.

⁶ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 4th ed., 35.

⁷ Martha J. Simmons, *Doing the Deed: The Mechanics of 21st Century Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: The African American Pulpit, 2012), 47 – 48.

⁸ Thomas Long, *The Witness of Preaching, Third Edition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 77.

⁹ Thomas Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 78 – 80.

author of *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, “a hermeneutical circle is the key method for practical theological interpretation.”¹⁰ This approach to interpretation utilizes four key tasks or avenues. Osmer’s approach to interpretations revolves around the practical approach to ministry. His normative, interpretive, pragmatic and descriptive approaches also apply to biblical interpretation.

James Cone and Gayraud Wilmore co-authors of the revolutionary classic text, *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Volume One: 1966 – 1979* focus on how oppressed people approach the Scriptures. James Cone stands on the foundation that theological interpretation is indelibly tied to the theme of liberation and oppression in the Bible. The hermeneutic, or interpretive lens, for James Cone's theology starts with the experience of the African American, and the theological questions he/she brings from his or her own life. Cone interprets the central being of the Gospels as ‘Jesus’ identification with the poor and oppressed and the resurrection as the ultimate of liberation.¹¹

According to Dr. Wilmore, “An approach to Black theology should be from an interdisciplinary perspective. Systematic theology, Christian ethics, and church history are aids for unpacking the debate and investigation.”¹² While this interdisciplinary approach is used foundationally to support the emergence of black theology, I suggest this approach may be applied to the exegesis of text as well. Cone and Wilmore thoughts

¹⁰ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 1 – 11.

¹¹ James Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Volume One: 1966 – 1979*, 2nd ed. Revised (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 37. Regarding black theology, “This indigenous theological formation of faith emerged from the stark need of the fragmented black community to affirm itself as a part of the kingdom of God. All theologies arise out of communal experience with God.”

¹² James Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Theology*, 2.

allow us to see through the lens of the oppressed Christian who sees God in the midst of all historical struggle. It is no wonder that when we approach scripture, God is more than a deliver. God is the one who sees the struggles of all oppressed people, who cry out to a delivering creator. And after God sees, God acts. With a focus on teaching, Christine Eaton Blair in the book, *The Art of Teaching the Bible* offers “The central focus of Bible study teachers is to help adults listen to the biblical texts and make connections with their own lives.”¹³ Ms. Blair encourages a “probing” of the text in order to understand the meaning of the text in the past and to make the text part of our own world. Blair’s approach to Scripture embodies four approaches:

Conversion - to see the bible as an encounter of the Holy God with sinful humanity; 2) *Common Identity with Bible People* – God’s story told through community stories, 3) *Justice/Faith in Action* – God’s call for social transformation and shalom, 4) *Spiritual Growth into a Holy Life* – God’s faithful love. This method asks four penetrating questions to pull from the text as we study. “In what ways do I need to repent and have my life transformed by the holy God? How do the biblical stories and our stories show God at work? What work do we need to do for justice and love of neighbor? How can I deepen and show my love for God?”¹⁴

It is interesting that exegetical approaches whether in practical theology, preaching, or teaching encompass most of the same steps in the process. The steps may have different names and presented in various orders, but overall, they are the same. Essentially, each of the methods of inquiry referenced above require a deep penetration of the text. The approach may be packaged differently, but all emphasize an in-depth approach is required. It is important to look at the text in its historical context in order to

¹³ Christine Eaton Blair, *The Art of Teaching the Bible: A Practical Guide for Adults* (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2001), 7.

¹⁴ Christine Eaton Blair. *The Art of Teaching the Bible: A Practical Guide for Adults*, 8 – 21.

determine why it may have been written; and what was happening in the culture at that time, whether economically, religiously, or politically, and socially. Its content must be studied, what is it saying, what are the dialogues revealing, and how was it said in another language. What do I bring to the reading? What are my psychological lens or biases, and how is the Scripture impacted by this? Am I an objective reader? Or can I refrain from being subjective? I find going outside of the box allows for different takes on seeing something. It is tantamount to being in a culture that is different from one's own.

Alice's portal entry into Wonderland began when she followed a rabbit down a rabbit hole. In the classic book by Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, first published in 1865, the reader is led through a magical adventure where little Alice engages and interacts with many different characters. The sequel to the book, *Through the Looking Glass*, published in 1871, follows Alice's return to an alternative world. While pondering what the world looks like on the other side of a mirror's reflection, she finds that she is able to step through it to another world. Again, as in the first book, wonderful and magical things occur. For me, one should approach the scriptures with a sense of wonder and adventure. Both content and context inspire awe and wonder. What adventures will be encountered as we travel back into time to strange and distant lands and cultures.

We should be excited to discover and rediscover people and places unlike our own amidst the human experience and its relationship with the creator, God. We should also realize that human behavior, idiosyncrasies, dysfunctions, are not suspended in time. We share the same joys, victories, fear, doubt and faith. We need a closer relationship

with God. We too need to be healed. We need to believe that Jesus is real, and that the writings can be believed.

Seeing or looking is frontal and peripheral at best. Even with great peripheral vision, which widens our view path, we do not have eyes in the back of our heads. Although sometimes it appears to children that parents are all seeing. Ask any child whose mother or father addresses something that he or she is doing or not doing without looking or turning around. However, when we look into a mirror, we can see behind us. The mirror becomes the eyes in the back of our head, even though what we see is a mere reflection. I use this as metaphor for looking into the mirror to see what is behind. When we approach Scripture and do a deep dive into it, hidden messages are revealed, secrets unfold, and imaginings take shape...we look back to see forward. Likewise, as it did for Alice, a new world of adventures begin for us.

As an African American, I bring my sociology, own experience, my education, my knowledge to the text. As a female in a society that is currently male dominated, how does my gender impact my reading of the text? As one who is a member of a marginalized community, what are my sensitivities around certain issues? Simmons suggest that we should all be aware of our interpretive framework. She writes, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. used the 'Beloved Community' as his hermeneutic or interpretive framework. Others use love and justice, or ecology and peace. Still others use relationships as their interpretive lens.¹⁵ The central question I gleaned from the hermeneutical exegetical lessons from the writers presented here is, how does my

¹⁵ Martha J. Simmons, *Doing the Deed: The Mechanics of 21st Century Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: The African American Pulpit, Inc., 2012), 47 – 48.

understanding of scripture impact my beliefs which impact my religion or practice both individually and communally outside of my social context? How will the participant's beliefs weigh on their ability to open up and be honest and transparent? A deeper dive into the foundational scripture utilizing elements of the various inquiry methods should prove enlightening and beneficial.

The Gospel According to Luke outline narratives that are taken from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*, Michael D. Coogan, editor. It is usually considered that Luke, the physician, is the author of the Gospel entitled Luke. References to Luke occur in several of the Apostle Paul's letters. It is these references that help to develop his identity. Luke is described as a companion of Paul, a fellow laborer in the book of Philemon, 24th chapter. Luke opens his narrative with a statement of his motive and purpose (1:1 – 4). He infers dissatisfaction with other writings about Jesus and declares that he is going to set the record straight. It is traditionally considered that Luke, the physician, is also the author of the book of Acts. Most scholars support the themes that Matthew shows Jesus to be the Jewish Messiah, and Mark shows Jesus to be the Servant of God, but Luke depicts Jesus as the perfect God-Man whose genealogy can be traced back to Adam. (Luke 3:23-38, NRSV) In Luke's narrative Jesus is the divinely commissioned agent who announces and promotes God's will for Israel. Another central aspect of Luke's Jesus is his solicitude for the poor and outcast. Marion L. Soards commentator writes,

In Luke's remembrance of Jesus, one finds an emphasis on God's compassion as Jesus reaches out to live and work among the marginal members of his society. Women, the less-than-pious, tax collectors, the poor, the sick, the oppressed, and

even noble Pharisees are present and interact with Jesus more prominently in this account than in any other.¹⁶

Jesus claims that his outreach to them constitutes his messianic credentials (7:18 – 22). Jesus congratulates them for belonging to God’s kingdom (6:20 – 21), which he envisions as a great banquet full of the poor and the outcast (14:12 – 24). Jesus warns about the spiritual dangers of wealth (6:24 - 25; 8:11 – 15; 12:13 – 21; 16:13 – 15) and others. Memorable passages feature Jesus’ compassion for sinners and His teaching about God’s compassion for them found in 7:36 – 50; 15:1 – 32; 23:34, 39 – 43. Structurally, it is proposed that the book of Luke is derived from the Gospel of Mark.

Luke’s writing shows a sensitivity to a Gentile audience. Gentiles is a term used by Jewish people to refer to foreigners, or any other people who were not a part of the Jewish race. He regularly translates or omits Aramaic terms in his sources, and often substitutes Greek names for Semitic ones. He omits Mark’s story about the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30). This story may have been offensive to gentiles. He depicts Jesus freely interacting with non-Jews and using them as positive example in his teaching (Mk. 4:25, 27; 7:1- 10; 10:29 – 37; 17:11 – 19). The date, time and place of writing has not been determined. Because of the language and in tandem with Acts, scholars state that the location could have been any major urban center in the Greek speaking areas of the Roman Empire. However, Antioch and Rome are contenders.

Apparently, there are four literary styles used in the writing of the Gospel of Luke. I paraphrase scholar’s notes that the first four verses are a single Greek sentence

¹⁶ Marion L. Soards, “The Gospel According to Luke” in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: Fully Revised 4th ed.*, Michael D. Coogan, ed., *New Revised Standard Version With The Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1828.

that uses the highly stylized introductory that is typical of ancient historical writings. The language is formal and refined in a fashion that is typical to well-educated citizens of the Roman Empire in the first century CE. Following this style, the narrative shifts to a style of Greek similar to that used in the Septuagint (the oldest Bible translation in the world, where the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek). This is a Semitic influenced form of Greek. The next shift in language is from the Septuagint-like style into a more normal and typically secular form of first-century Greek called “koine”. Luke use of language varies to suit the locale and characters in the narrative. This is similarly to how we use a street lingo, or slang, or high academic speech, or demographic dialect or localisms. I think that this is brilliant on the author’s part. Understandably, the people Luke was trying to reach, in particular the Gentiles, may or may not have been in the middle or upper middle classes. His readers would understand at one level or another. Asking questions is still at the center of studying the text.

Considered to be well crafted, the story quickly sets expectations for the reader. Luke begins by claiming he is writing a more orderly account like many others before him. However, he writes to the intended recipient his account will be the truth (Lk. 1:1-4, NRSV). The reader automatically anticipates what is coming. Soards writes, “Readers who become actively involved with Luke’s account will find hints and signals that provoke questions and expectations that are answered after one has read the whole story.”¹⁷ In addition, Soards states,

In general, wondering about the nature of salvation, the character of the kingdom of God, the reality of repentance, and the person and work of Jesus as the Lord, God’s messiah, son and savior, will lead readers to ask about the deeper significance of the story that Luke is telling. Luke’s primary concern is to inform

¹⁷ Marion L. Soards, “The Gospel According to Luke,” 1828.

the reader who Jesus of Nazareth was and now, who he is as the suffering, crucified savior and the risen exalted Lord.¹⁸

In the Gospel of Luke, God is in relationship with God's people through his Son, Jesus.

Soards continues to enlighten,

Luke's elegantly crafted account of Jesus' life and teaching shows him to be "the Lord," God's son who is the universal savior of humanity. Jesus inaugurates a mission to all humankind as the kingdom of God draws near to the ordinary lives of people in Jesus' persona and work. Luke's version of Jesus' story presents Jesus' coming among humanity, in birth, life, ministry, suffering, death and resurrection, as the fulfilment of God's promises of salvation, which brings peace and well-being in a definitive way. This saving event inaugurated the final stage of God's dealings with humanity in anticipation of the "Last Day," the Day of the Lord," Jesus himself and, in turn, his disciples call people to true repentance, which means a new relationship to God and to other human beings in a manner of life that embodies God's will for human existence.¹⁹

God's promises of salvation brings peace and well-being in a definitive way. Soards' words precisely echo my biblical foundation support for the project.

Other hermeneutical lens provide deeper perspectives to the lessons found in the book of Luke. Nigerian, Justin Ukpong from the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, is a contributing writer to the *Global Bible Commentary*.²⁰ Ukpong's contribution to the commentary is an essay on the Gospel of Luke, entitled, "Life Context of the Interpretation". Ukpong's lens is shaped by historical conditions. Early Christian missionaries and their behaviors toward the inhabitants of sub Saharan shapes his viewpoint. The missionaries looked down on the culture, religions and beliefs. Ukpong's complaint is that the missionaries also did not address the wrongs the people endured

¹⁸ Marion L. Soards, "The Gospel According to Luke" 1828 – 1829.

¹⁹ Marion L. Soards, "The Gospel According to Luke" 1828 – 1829.

²⁰ Daniel Patte, *Global Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), xxi (A collection of essays on the Bible from scholars from all over the world) "The scholars share two basic convictions: biblical interpretations always matters, and reading the Bible with others is highly rewarding."

because of colonialism. He argues “the process of evangelization did not involve direct confrontation of oppressive colonial power.”²¹ Ukpong contends that Luke’s benign treatment of the oppressive Romans also reflects this sense of not wanting to upset the powers that be, albeit in their wrongness. He summarizes that although the author of Luke refers to the political authorities of the empire in his story, 1:5, 2:1, 3:1, 2, 19 – 20, and 23:1 – 25 47, 50 – 54; his assertion is that Luke wanted to present Christianity in a way that would not antagonize the colonial authority and would also appeal to the elite of the empire. Luke’s Jesus does not make enough significant political changes for Ukpong. Luke does not present Jesus as “directly challenging the colonial authority, which was responsible for the people’s plight despite his interest in the poor”²². Ukpong’s consideration of the text reflect his own life’s experiences with the church, and religious persons.

Coming from a place of oppression, we tend to want Jesus to smite the perpetrators of our hurt. Interestingly, Jesus was not accepted by many Jews because their expected Messiah would be a warrior. The warrior they were waiting for would declare war on their enemies and protect them. Jesus came as a servant. Blacks in America early understanding of the bible and God was shaped by ‘churched and believing’ people who manipulated scriptures to reinforce their needs. Beginning in the 17th and 18th century, whites used the bible to support the horrific practice of chattel slavery. Once black slaves and freed men and women began to learn to read, they discovered a different God and a

²¹ Justin Ukpong, “Luke: Life Context of the Interpretation” in *Global Bible Commentary*, ed. Daniel Patte (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2014), 385.

²² Justin Ukpong, “Luke: Life Context of the Interpretation”, 393.

different plan of God for their lives. They began to interpret the bible stories and its theological underpinnings for them. As a result, African American biblical interpretation was birthed. C. Anthony Hunt writes in the article, “African-American Biblical Interpretation” in the text *Scripture and Its Interpretation, A Global, Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible*:

For African-American Christians, the Bible has been and continues to be the foundational source for comprehending and appropriating faith in God. To discuss the Bible is to engage in conversation about the church’s book. In this respect, the Bible – with its stories, personalities, and places – has taken on life: it is a living document. Its stories are not merely historical episodes but narratives that have assumed an existential reality for persons over the course of a number of generations.²³

As a result, the approach to scriptures by African Americans are the result of a life shaped by the harshness of slavery and continued oppression. In spite of the hardness and harshness experienced, blacks did and continue to approach the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Jesus. A strong faith keeps the connection viable. The church was and is the central and pivotal institutional space in black communities.

The importance of the ‘space’ one occupies with regards to context is a primary factor. Writers in the ground-breaking commentary, *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary* expound on African American biblical interpretation. The commentary engages the New Testament historically, socially, politically, and existentially through a very particular and unique African American

²³ C. Anthony Hunt, “African American Biblical Interpretation” in *Scripture and Its Interpretation: A Global Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 298.

lens.²⁴ Scholars typically do not try to suggest that this interpretative method is the only morally right focus. While refuting the teachings of the dominant biblical interpretation of the ruling class, its goal is to acknowledge the viewpoint that African American historical context helps to form its “understanding and subsequent approaches to God. Thus, “The space one occupies becomes dominant. Owing to the novelty that “space” matters, and most specifically that one’s sociocultural space matters. Where we come from and who we are influence how we read the Bible and translate it theologically so that it becomes meaningful and effective in our lives.”²⁵ The spaces we occupy influence our life’s experiences. What flows from those spaces is valid. What is so interesting is that those who occupy the dominant space either refuse to acknowledge the space of others or dismiss the thoughts and ideas that flow from that space.

I find it extraordinary that upon researching a specific text about a woman and her encounter with Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, a contributing commentator on that very Gospel is a woman. Stephanie Buckhannon Crowder, assistant professor, pastor, and author provides a scholarly review of the Gospel of Luke in the commentary.²⁶ As to why the book of Luke resonates with African Americans, Dr. Crowder opines, “African American followers of Jesus believe in a complete approach to finding God, and the Gospel of Luke as a document of African American faith aids in this approach.” She

²⁴ Brian K. Blount, Cain Hope Felder, Clarice J. Martin and Emerson B. Powery, ed. *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 1.

²⁵ Brian K. Blount, Cain Hope Felder, Clarice J. Martin and Emerson B. Powery, ed. *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary*, 2.

²⁶ Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder, “The Gospel of Luke,” in *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary*, ed. Brian K. Blount (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 158 – 185.

asserts, “The Gospel of Luke also speaks to African American spirituality, sociology, and history. Its imagery is reminiscent of the coded nature of the spirituals and other slave songs.”²⁷ Additional approaches to biblical interpretation may be found in the black theology, and womanist theology.

Built out of a profound space of emptiness, a serious gap was revealed in the development of black liberation theology and that of feminist thought. Black theology connects the black liberation struggle to the New Testament idea that God has a preferential bias toward the poor, and the oppressed. This God was placed in the context of the historical struggle for black liberation. Cone’s groundbreaking work was missing the voice of the black woman’s struggle. This omission was later challenged by many womanist scholars. For example, Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas contends, “Even when liberation movements such as Black theology and feminist theology challenged this hegemony in the late 1960s, the material reality of Black women was still largely ignored.”²⁸ Early womanist pioneers such as Katie Geneva Cannon, Jacquelyn Grant, and Delores Williams were responsible for introducing the new concept of womanism to the academy. “What characterizes womanist discourse is that Black women are engaged in the process of knowledge production that is most necessary for their own flourishing.”²⁹

²⁷ Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder, “The Gospel of Luke,” in *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary*, 159.

²⁸ Stacey M Floyd-Thomas, *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006), 2.

²⁹ Stacey M Floyd-Thomas, *Deeper Shades of Purple*, 2.

In the introduction to the text, *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society*, Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas writes, “Womanism is revolutionary. Womanism is a paradigm shift wherein Black women no longer look to others for their liberation, but instead look to themselves. What characterizes womanist discourse is that Black women are engaged in the process of knowledge production that is most necessary for their own flourishing.”³⁰ It was in the words of Alice Walker in the text, *In Search of Our Mother’s Garden*, womanists found an identification for themselves. Walker’s use of the word womanish and its definition provided the impetus for the development of womanist thought. The definition includes,

Womanish”, “acting womanish – acting grown up – trying to be grown. A womanish woman is one who loves, sexually and or non-sexually, committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female; loves music, loves dance, loves the moon and loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. Regardless, a Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.”³¹

There has been debate over the use of the understanding and differences between feminism and womanism. It was clear to Black women scholars that while feminism and womanism are about liberation there is a distinct difference. It reads in the text, *Womanist Theological Ethics*,

A womanist hermeneutics of liberation shares with feminist hermeneutics of liberation the goal of changing consciousness and transforming reality. But the main point of our work as womanist scholars, I think, is to empower African American woman as readers, as agents, and as shapers of discourse by uncovering the program and agenda for both biblical texts and dominant cultural readings.³²

³⁰ Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, *Deeper Shades of Purple*, 1.

³¹ Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers Garden* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1983), xi – xii.

³² Renita Weems, “Re-Reading for Liberation: African American Women and the Bible” in *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader*, ed., Katie Geneva Cannon, Emilie M. Townes, and Angela D. Sims (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 51 - 63.

Another expression regarding womanism and Black women is written by Diana L. Hayes, Professor of Systematic Theology at Georgetown University, and a Catholic womanist theologian. She writes in *Deeper Shades of Purple*.

I do recognize that other women of color may also use the term “womanist,” but I am deliberately excluding the use of the term by Euro-American (women) as I believe Walker’s description has been critically employed and developed by women of color (especially African American women). I do this in order to be clear especially to my white female students and others with whom I interact in the Roman Catholic Church who have a tendency to immediately appropriate the term for their own use. We who are of African descent must be able to define ourselves exclusively in ways that speak to our historical experience and contemporary situation.³³

She goes on to say that she knows that there are those who disagree with her restriction of the term. Ms. Hayes defends her position by stating that her particular circumstances as an African American Catholic woman is what leads her to be restrictive or paraphrase. She continues that she hopes that womanist could be adopted by all women and states, “As from its beginnings it has been a theology that attempts to deal holistically with issues of race, class, and gender (including sexual orientation)”³⁴.

How would womanists approach the scripture of a woman who has been bent over for eighteen years? How would a womanist engage this woman who may have been a Jew, but most likely a gentile, ostracized by her community; yet having the gumption to make it to the synagogue? How would one in the words of Pui-Lan, “find meaning in the

³³ Diana L. Hayes, “Standing in the Shoes My Mother Made: The Making of a Catholic Womanist Theologian” in *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society* (New York, NY: University Press, 2006), 74.

³⁴ Diana L. Hayes, “Standing in the Shoes My Mother Made”, 74.

past, discerning the signs of the present, and envision the future.”³⁵ While we see our own conditions and circumstances, understanding the other woman’s conditions encourages and broadens the conversation. Would there be a conversation about how she has survived all these years with this seemingly debilitating handicap? Has she received kindnesses from the community? How has she drawn from her heritage to enable her to keep on keeping?

In the seminal text, *Just A Sister Away*, womanist, theologian, scholar, teacher, Renita Weems offers this simple notion of how a womanist approaches the sacred text. Weems argues that the womanist desires to see herself, and more wholly a place for everyone. As women, we can look deep and explore the stories to give us clues as to how biblical women felt about their lives. Weems utilizes the narratives of several women in the bible to explore how they felt about themselves, what they felt, and how they treated other women. Weems also argued that despite the difference in time, “biblical women were compelled by the same passions as we, love, compassion, hope, jealousy, and fear”.³⁶ As we contemplate this woman’s circumstances, can we can empathize with her. Certain questions may cause us to be transported back in time. We can put ourselves in her shoes so to speak. How does she feel when she hears the man speaking against her being healed because it is the Sabbath? Is he able bodied? Are others now listening to his challenge, is a crowd growing? Additional questions to consider as we ponder her situation are, does she think healing is a possibility for her? Does she know of Jesus? Has

³⁵ Kwok, Pui Lan, “Womanist Visions, Womanist Spirit: An Asian Feminist’s Response”, in *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society*, ed. Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006), 257.

³⁶Renita J. Weems, *Just A Sister Away: Understanding the Timeless Connection Between Woman of Today and Women in the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: Innisfree Press, Inc., 1988), x.

she resigned herself to her life and physical condition? We are not told the answers to these questions, we can only surmise. When we consider this story for today we may also ask, is the sanctuary a place for healing today? Are we bound by laws, rituals, and traditions that overrule divine grace? Are we truly empathetic? Many of us cannot imagine what it is like for a disabled person to live and exist in a world built for able-bodied persons.

Disabled people, those in wheelchairs, blind, hearing impaired, other physical disabilities have to navigate in systems created for people who have no impairments. Only those who have firsthand experience, such as care givers, family and friends are intimately aware of the effort needed to live from day to day with disabilities. I had an uncle, (deceased), who was blinded while serving in the Korean War. He became independent by going to a school for the blind. He learned to read braille, and could navigate in his home. However, many other liberties were loss to him. The religious leader in this story had no empathy or compassion for this bent over woman and her condition. We assume that he was able bodied. How many of us are oblivious to the burdens that others carry. Yet, by a phenomenal stroke of timing Jesus happens to be in that place at that moment, AND he sees her. I am beyond moved by this. Jesus sees her. I imagine that in a flash Jesus knows everything about her...her daily struggles and toils, her desires, her sorrow and her hopes. He wants better for her; he wants her healed; he wants her upright; he wants her whole, and it does not matter that it is the Sabbath day. Just as Jesus sees, we should see and know a sister. We should see each other, and in our way... heal each other.

What did it mean then and what is its meaning for today? The first thing that stands out in the text is that this woman, who remains unnamed, has made her way into the synagogue in her condition. It appears that she did not let her condition stop her. Was her faith the force behind her actions? Was this a divine intervention? Was this not just coincidence? Secondly, the text tells us that Jesus saw her. He saw her in her bent over state. I am persuaded that Jesus saw this woman inside and out. I am persuaded he did not just see her physical condition, but her mental and emotional state as well. He saw how her condition had shaped her life, culturally, socially and economically over the past eighteen years. She is one who lives in the margins. She is probably overlooked regularly. She is not seen by the crowd. How does she survive daily? Does she hug the walls as she goes about careful not to fall when she is pushed aside by unthinking others? Her view is always of the ground. The walking sticks she uses for support scratch at objects along her way. Some might regard her condition as a result of something she has done wrong. Disease in Jesus' time is thought to be caused by sin. Jesus seemed to regard sickness, disease, and infirmities as the result of Satan's evil activity in the world. According to what we read in John 9: 2 – 4, Jesus did not believe that disease was the result of individual sin. He often called out spirits and demons and as a result physical bodies were healed. Those who were 'possessed' by demons whether mentally or emotionally were set free.

He saw the challenges she faced with the ground as her worldview. He saw the difficulty she had in doing household chores, and performing her daily living tasks. He knew if she was ostracized by the community, or if she was cared for. What a wonderful thing to happen to her. She receives an unasked for gift. She is healed, and

made whole. She stands upright for the first time in years. The weight has been lifted. She praises God. Then the complaints are heard from the synagogue leader. Jesus rebukes the complainer and others who are present agree with Jesus.

Healing may occur after many years of suffering. Healing may or may not occur in the ways in which we expect. Like Jesus, his followers should desire the healing of others of the faith. Healing is grace extended. What we desire for ourselves should be what we desire for another. Theologically, the issue presented in this periscope is one of law verses grace, healing verses sickness and disease, embodying Jesus heart or not. The issue does not seem to be that she is healed, but that she is healed on the Sabbath. The synagogue leader does not even acknowledge the woman. He does not address her, nor does he offer thanksgiving to Jesus for healing her. Instantly, the environment went from one of celebration to one of discord and disdain. Immediately, the leader of the synagogue complains that Jesus had done this act on the Sabbath, and tries to incite the people there. He exhorted, “There are six days when work is to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the Sabbath Day” (Lk 13:14, NRSV). Unlike today’s society with its nonstop hustle and bustle and busyness, the Sabbath was deemed necessary as a day of rest after a week of work. This law was based on the fact that God created the world in six days and rested from his work on the seventh day:

God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So, God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. (Gen. 1:31-2:13, NRSV).

God again established the importance of the Sabbath Day in the laws given to Moses for the people. The bible lists ten of these commandments or laws. The fourth law on the list

is to “Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy” (Exo. 20:1-17). The seventh day is to be devoted to rest. No work is to be done on this day. Jesus did not consider the healing of the woman as work. He even challenged the leader and called them hypocrites because they also performed duties on the Sabbath. He offered as an example their untying and leading their animals to water. His example showed the ridiculousness of the situation. Animals could be watered, but a woman, a daughter of Abraham was not to be healed.

Buckhanon Crowder articulates that one can reinterpret Luke’s record of Sabbath occurrences as a time “to set the captive free and to let the oppressed go free.”³⁷ Reading this statement set off a fire storm for me. As I read deeper, it was revealed to me that the woman who was held captive by her physical condition and the oppressive religious system, was not the only one who needed healing. The religious leader also was a captive. He was held captive by his thoughts and convictions. The barriers of his religion were so structured he could not see or think outside of the box. He put the law ahead of the human condition and was unable to partake in divine grace. Did he miss his opportunity to be healed as well? While this is not to denigrate the law, it stresses how dogma, traditionalism, holds those who seek to control and those who are controlled in its grip. Jesus restores us through his acknowledgement, his touch, and his love. Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder affirms this, “Jesus restores her humanity by calling her to him and by touching her, thereby symbolically drawing an ‘untouchable’ once again into community. He restores her racial and ethnic identity by referring to her as a daughter of

³⁷ Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder, “The Gospel of Luke” in *True to Our Native Land*, 172.

Abraham.”³⁸ As a result of Jesus’ rebuke, the leader was put to shame, and the crowd kept rejoicing.

Several biblical foundational principles are raised in this text. Place is important here. The woman is healed in the synagogue. God does not stay within the lines. The Spirit moves in spite of our planned and ordered worship service and programs. The human condition overrides the law. God’s love for his people overrides tradition. We should expect to see healings and miracles even now. Divine occurrences happening in God’s house should be a reality. The authority of God takes precedence over religious and social oppression. God’s love for his daughter is revealed in Jesus’ compassionate healing of the woman. He knew the conflict his actions would set in motion. Here we see God’s purpose to heal, liberate and unbind in the face of opposition.

This pericope embodies elements of healing that may occur even within us. We may attempt to continue to survive even though hindered by inner disabilities. We may be fully aware that Jesus wants us whole, but refuse to give up the unforgiveness, or hate, or guilt or shame associated with psychological wounds. We may, like the religious leader, even sabotage Jesus’ promptings and urges to heal us. This may be done through constant rehearsing events and acts that have hurt us. We may surround ourselves with persons who are limited in their relationships with God and self. Jesus called the woman a child of Abraham. As a child of Abraham, she deserves the best life she may have. As a child of Abraham, she deserves the support and care of the community, her peers, and her church.

³⁸ Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder, “The Gospel of Luke” in *True to Our Native Land*, 172.

Healings never seem to occur in isolation. Even when no one is around, the persons eventually shares the miraculous thing that has happen. Jesus saw her, he announced her healing and he touched her. This is the desire for the participants of this project. The Apostle Paul stresses in his letter to the Ephesians the benefits of knowing and understanding that it is *the entire body*, with Jesus as the head and believers as the body, working in tandem that produces growth. And growth benefits the whole body. When healing occurs, it changes not only the individual but the whole community. Hayes words are in agreement.

The struggle is communal not individual, and can be won only if experiences are shared, stories told, songs are sung, histories are reclaimed and restored, a new language emerges, which speaks of peace and unity, which unites, which recalls both the pain and the joy of our different heritages and leads us into a brand new day.³⁹

The preeminent undergirding foundation for desiring wholeness, or oneness is love. A love that acknowledges and honors the interconnectedness of us all in spite of the challenges that manifest it in our lives.

But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love. (Eph. 4:15 – 16, NRSV)

Women, bent over, broken and scared can be made to stand up straight again. Hopefully, each part will be working properly.

³⁹ Diana L. Hayes, “Standing in the Shoes My Mother Made”, 74.

CHAPTER THREE
HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

NANNIE HELEN BURROUGHS
1879 - 1961



Free Within Ourselves
“A Time to Be Silent and a Time to Speak”

Introduction

This chapter will look back historically at the issue of emancipation and empowerment for the black woman in America during the late eighteenth through early nineteenth centuries. A deeper dive and a closer look will be directed at the African American church woman and her place in the struggle. Voices from the past include women who in spite of their social and cultural positions became the pioneers for the advancement of a better life for the disenfranchised, the marginalized, and those on the lowest rung of the economic and political ladder. One such woman is Nannie Helen Burroughs. How she made a difference through her courage and activism is the primary focus of this chapter. The terms African American and black will be used interchangeably.¹ There is the absolute recognition that all women; white, black, and all of the others in America and indeed in the world, have undergone a tremendous transformation with regards to civil and human rights over time. However, there are still a large number of women in many cultures that are being horribly victimized either physically, emotionally, culturally, economically, and/or socially. Easily, in many cultures, women are still the objects and targets of misogyny, the dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women.

Jaeyeon Lucy Chung writes of Korean Women and their self-esteem or false self-esteem issues, which have resulted from years of abuse during colonial times. Abuse issues that were never resolved. Residue of abuse still cling to the inner psyche of the Korean woman. This abuse has been cultural, perpetuated during war and a patriarchal

¹ It is appropriate to note that during Nannie Helen Burroughs time, African-Americans were commonly referred to as Negroes. Therefore quotes by her or about her programs will include the term Negro; however I will not use the term when referring to people of color, descendants of slaves or freed men and women in America.

society. Chung writes, “Many were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese army.

Generally known as ‘comfort women’, they were subject to daily degradations as

physical and verbal abuse.”² She goes on to state,

“Though change has come to the country in progressive ways, women have been subjected through time with conflicting values. Many infer that culturally a woman’s place is in the home. She was to be a ‘wise mother’ first; followed by ‘a good wife.’ As a result, Korean women have thus experienced psychological progression and regression, struggling with the formation of self-identity in the interaction with traditional cultures and their newly achieved consciousness.”³

It is important to note that in our so-called evolved societies where women appear to be outwardly free, they are inwardly bound.

In today’s time many women are living lives resembling those of their ancestors. Women worldwide are still living with many restrictions. These restrictions may be the perpetrator of many hurts. Even with the many strides women have made globally, in the United States and in other nations, women still bear the brunt of untold pain. We know our stories and it is interesting to hear the stories of other women in other lands. Chung writes of hindrances in spite of progress,

In spite of many women’s effort women’s efforts to heighten political consciousness since the 1970s, their actions have not automatically led themselves to psychological enlightenment and healing. Women still suffer from psychological wounds and a sense of frustration and depression because changes in law and policy have not fully transformed the people’s collective unconsciousness...⁴

In our so-called evolved societies, woman may appear to be outwardly free, but are inwardly bound. Yet, many flourish and perform and make differences pushing hurts

² Jaeyeon Lucy Chung, *Korean Women, Self-Esteem, and Practical Theology* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave, 2017), 3-6.

³ Jaeyeon Lucy Chung, *Korean Women, Self-Esteem, and Practical Theology*, 4 - 5.

⁴ Jaeyeon Lucy Chung, *Korean Women, Self-Esteem, and Practical Theology*, 6.

deep within them. While Nannie H. Burroughs is the impetus behind this historical foundation document, it will be Dr. Martin Luther King's four basic steps of a nonviolent campaign that will serve as the overarching methodology for research and implementation for the D. Min. project. In his letter from a Birmingham jail, Dr. King defines the four basic steps of a nonviolent campaign. "In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: 1) collection of the facts to determine whether injustices are alive, 2) negotiation, 3) self-purification, and 4) direct action."⁵ The steps will be used as a rubric to guide our thinking and documentation. Nannie Helen Burroughs was a teacher, activist, early civil and women's rights leader. Her tactics for uplifting the community will be viewed through the lens of these four basic steps.

Her campaign for women's empowerment indeed was a nonviolent, but effective campaign. She was one of a cadre of mighty women of valor who fought the fight; not with what is typically defined as violence, or weapons of mass destruction. The weapons used by this formidable army were found in the everyday existence of resistance. I assert that in every struggle there are weapons. All weapons are not violent in a sense. The Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians of this in the second letter he wrote to them.

Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5, NRSV)

⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter From A Birmingham Jail" in *Why We Can't Wait* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1964), 76 – 95. The "Letter From a Birmingham Jail" written in long hand by Dr. King on April 16, 1963, in response to criticism by a group of white clergy in Alabama, which identified the works of Dr. King as unwise and untimely. The letter defends the strategy of nonviolent resistance to racism.

The church and its preeminent guiding document, the bible, was the central place for strategy to fight against the very real ills of the day. The church was also the place for rejuvenation, for refueling and where one found solace and reassurance. It was the place where one dared to release the breath. Though this is a historical foundations chapter, and not a biblical foundations chapter, there was then and for many today, no separation between the church and self in the black community. The weapons of persistence, perseverance, and practice, proved to be just as formidable as water hoses, clubs, dogs and sticks, fists, and the rope. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham writes of the significance of the church, the Bible and everyday forms of resistance. Higginbotham is adamant that,

During these years, the church served as the most effective vehicle by which men and women alike, pushed down by racism and poverty, regrouped and rallied against emotional and physical defeat. In some instances, church women contested racist ideology and institutions through demands for anti-lynching legislation and an end to segregation laws. They expressed their discontent with both racial and gender discrimination and demanded equal rights for blacks and women – advocating voting rights or equal employment and educational opportunities. Black women even drew upon the [B]ible, the most respected source within their community, to fight for women's rights in the church and society at large. More often, however, their efforts represented not dramatic protest but everyday forms of resistance to oppression and demoralization. Through the fund-raising efforts of women, the black church built schools, provided clothes and food to poor people, established old folks' homes and orphanages, and made available a host of needed social welfare services.⁶

Rosetta Ross also supports the link between religion and social activism. Ross opines,

The most potent aspect of an African American religious worldview is the understanding that religious duty includes racial uplift and social responsibility, two foci that derive from, respectively, survival and liberation themes of Black religion. The earliest independent religious movements among Africans in America reflect survival themes.⁷

⁶ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880 – 1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 1-2.

⁷ Rosetta E. Ross, *Witnessing & Testifying: Black Women, Religion, and Civil Rights* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 3-4.

Nannie Helen Burroughs recognized the issues her community, especially the women, faced during her lifetime. She put processes and actions in place to address the needs and to bring about change, liberation, freedom and empowerment. This project will utilize the same basic tenets to delve deeper into the issues women are facing today in the 21st century. The process will include the following strategic actions: 1) Recognize the issues, and 2) develop a plan of action to address the issues, and 3) implement the plan. Though Burroughs' population was women of color, in general, she worked for the edification of women and men. Her platform was founded and established in the church. This work is not a biography of Ms. Burroughs life, but will refer to her methodology for raising up or lifting an oppressed segment of society for what she considered the betterment of the individual, the community and therefore the whole society. Finally, using Burroughs formula for "self-deliverance", a model will be developed to examine and address the inner issues women still face today, especially in the church, and in the society.

Burroughs was born on May 2, 1879. America was two years out of the Reconstruction years and the Jim Crow era of enforced racial segregation had already begun at the time of her birth. Jim Crow's legalized laws of segregation would last until 1965. However, many states and local jurisdictions would keep Jim Crow laws on the books for many years. Blacks during these times experienced much racial oppression. Black Codes, Jim Crow Laws, sharecropping, convict leasing and peonage strategies to re-enslave blacks were put in place. Peonage, blacks imprisoned for no other reason than penalized slavery was a common practice.

Douglas A. Blackmon's monumental piece, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*, provides an in-depth look into the outfall of these practices. He submits this description of peonage.

A system in which armies of free men, guilty of no crimes and entitled by law to freedom, were compelled to labor without compensation were repeatedly bought and sold, and were forced to do the bidding of white masters through the regular application of extraordinary physical coercion.⁸

Men were the primary subject of Blackmon's study, though some women were impacted by the system. As black men were forcibly taken from their homes and families, black women subsequently found themselves in the role of the responsible provider in the household. The irony existed that while a woman had the responsibility and leadership in her household such as it was, she had no authority in the larger community. Her existence was premeditated by the whims of others, and the powerful in the society. The black woman finds herself in the realm of human existence at the bottom of the food chain.

Susanne Lebsock researched the history of women in Petersburg, Virginia over the period of 1784 – 1860. She provides a vast amount of information about free black women in the text. She describes the autonomy that both black and white women had at the time. Autonomous and independent, they were thus self-reliant. Ownership of property was the source of independence for many of them. Many of these self-sustaining women were not married. Husbands could not touch property of their wives Lebsock asserts.⁹ In comparison, property owners and independent black women found themselves caught between two worlds.

⁸ David Blackmon, *Slavery by another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2009), 4.

⁹ Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784 – 1860* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), xv.

Lebsock shares the story of Eliza Gallie, a free black woman. Gallie was a relatively powerful woman, propertied, autonomous (divorced, actually), and assertive, according to Lebsock. Yet, she was charged with a crime she did not commit and declared guilty. Lebsock writes, “Free black women were frequently accused of petty crimes, and for free blacks as for slaves, whipping was the punishment prescribed by law. There was nothing unusual about this.”¹⁰ Because of her resources Gallie chose to fight and hired a lawyer. Her attempts to vindicate herself were unsuccessful. She subsequently submitted and was punished in the town square.¹¹ I surmise Gallie’s gumption to fight back was phenomenal for a black woman then as it is now. Everyone struggles in his or her own way, however; the black woman struggles seem even more insurmountable. We are battered on every leaning side, from without and from within. Yet, throughout history black women have fought back in her own way. In other words, we fight when we leave our homes; we fight in our homes; we fight in our churches; and we fight them, and we fight each other...we fight.

Nannie Helen Burroughs was a Christian and a fighter. Her life’s works were built upon the theology of God and God’s relationship to man and woman. Her voice was said to be strong and confident even as a young adult. For all that she contributed, she is not a recognized household figure to many with regards to civil rights, social justice, or philosophy, or her feminism. There has not been a ton of academic or scholarly writing about her in the past; however that is on the rise. Editor Kelisha B. Graves provides a comprehensive list in the annotated text, *Nannie Helen Burroughs: A Documentary*

¹⁰ Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg*, 87.

¹¹ Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg*, 88.

Portrait of an Early Civil Rights Pioneer, 1900 – 1959. Her list of scholarly writings about Burroughs include:

Bettye Collier-Thomas's magnum opus *Jesus, Jobs, and Justice: African American Women and Religions* highlights Burroughs as a key figure in the national network of black women's religio-political and social activism during one of the greatest periods of American change and growth. Others such as Sharon Harley and Audrey McCluskey looked at Burroughs through a feminist lens. Each considered her social education work and school building legacy. Susan Lindley moves Burroughs into religious studies discourse proper by arguing for her inclusion as a pivotal contributor to the early social gospel movement.¹²

Graves also reviewed several dissertations, which she concludes, represents the most prodigious works produced about Burroughs in the last twenty years. She provides the cites,

Karen Johnson's *Uplifting Women and the Race: "A Black Feminist Theoretical Critique of the Lives, Works, and Educational Philosophies of Anna Julia Cooper and Nannie Helen Burroughs"*; Traki Taylor's *"God's School on the Hill: Nannie Helen Burroughs and the National Training School for Girls, 1909-1961"*; Lolita C. Boykin's *Integrating Natural Coping and Survival Strategies for African American Women in Social Work Practice: Lessons Learned from the Works of Nannie Helen Burroughs*"; Ann Michele Mason's *"Nannie H. Burroughs' Rhetorical Leadership during the Inter-War Period"*, and Shantina Jackson's *"To Struggle and Battle and Overcome: The Educational Thought of Nannie Helen Burroughs, 1865-1961"*.¹³

Burroughs work on racial uplift occurred before the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955. Some see her as a forerunner of the civil rights movement. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. acknowledges Burroughs as "One of the leading voices in the Negro race today" in a written response to an invitation from her. A copy of the written response to Nannie Helen Burroughs invitation to Dr. King to speak to her youth organization is captured in

¹² Kelisha B. Graves, ed., *Nannie Hellen Burroughs: A Documentary Portrait of an Early Civil Rights Pioneer: 1900 – 1959* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), xvii.

¹³ Kelisha B. Graves, *Nannie Hellen Burroughs*, xvii.

The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King acknowledged her work, “We are eternally grateful to you for the great work you are doing for the Baptist of America and for the whole of Christendom.”¹⁴

Nannie H. Burroughs is but one of a cadre of driven black women who were determined to uplift the race. A woman ahead of her time. She died in 1961 at the age of eighty-two. Nannie Burroughs was a proponent of keeping it moving. Audrey Thomas McCluskey remembers Burroughs in *A Forgotten Sisterhood: Pioneering Black Women Educators and Activists in the Jim Crow South*, as one of a cadre of phenomenal women whose contributions greatly impacted the lives of blacks through education and uplift. The group of four included Lucy Craft Laney (1854 – 1933), founder of Haines Institute; Mary McLeod Bethune (1875 – 1955), founder of Bethune-Cookman College and the National council of Negro Women; Nannie Helen Burroughs (1879 – 1961), founder of the National Training School for Negro Women and Girls; and Charlotte Brown Hawkins (1883 – 1961), founder of Palmer Memorial Institute.¹⁵ McCluskey continues,

These women were among the striving class of blacks who had gained access to education through a combination of mentorship, diligence, and bountiful faith. Collectively, they embraced the broader, self-imposed mandate shared by their generation who united to form organizations and build schools. It took an audacious sense of agency for them, especially women of very limited means, to persevere despite tremendous obstacles. Living in an era of harsh racial repression, as well as a social order that constricted and confined women, they embraced teaching. Purported to be the “natural” role for women, teaching children provided the opportunity for the useful service that they sought. Founding their own schools gave them a platform upon which to expand their individual authority and grow their collective vision for uplift.¹⁶

¹⁴ Clayborne Carson, ed. *The Papers of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: Volume IV: Symbol of the Movement, January 1957 – December 1958* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 378.

¹⁵ McCluskey, Audrey Thomas, *A Forgotten Sisterhood: Pioneering Black Women Educators and Activists in the Jim Crow South* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 2.

¹⁶ Audrey Thomas McCluskey, *A Forgotten Sisterhood*, 2.

Burroughs was a member of the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church located in Washington, D.C., and established in 1839 as one of the first black Baptist churches in the District of Columbia. The black church was and continues to be a place of nurturing, mentoring, and affirming. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham writes,

The black church represented the realm where individual souls communed intimately with God and where African Americans as a people freely discussed, debated, and devised an agenda for their common good. At the same time that church values and symbols ordered the epistemological and ontological understandings of each individual and gave meaning to the private sphere of family, both as conjugal household and as “household of faith” – church values and symbols helped to spawn the largest number of voluntary associations in the black community. It follows logically then, that the church would introduce black women to public life. The church connected black women’s spiritually integrally with social activism.¹⁷

From the early days of slavery, the black church had constituted the backbone of the black community. The Nineteenth Street Baptist church was a beacon for some of the best and the brightest of the day. This progressive church was pastored by Rev. Walter H. Brooks.

The Reverend Dr. Walter Henderson Brooks was already an established community leader when he was installed as pastor on November 12, 1882. He served as pastor from 1882-1945. Under his leadership, the church membership grew to over 3,500 and attracted leaders of the African American community. The church became one of the nation's leading prestigious black Baptist congregations and wielded considerable influence. Jacqueline Moore writes, “Nineteenth Street Baptist church gained a reputation as an elite church with the appointment of the Reverend Walter H. Brooks. Dr. Brooks

¹⁷ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 16.

was a progressive Baptist with a firm belief in an educated clergy and citizenry. As such he endeared himself and his church to black high society.”¹⁸ Moore continues,

Brooks had already made a name for himself as an advocate for education before his arrival in Washington. In 1881 he had written a widely read article advocating the expansion of the curriculum in the black Baptist colleges beyond the current theological courses; he wanted to see them included the sort of courses being offered by Howard and Fisk universities. He particularly emphasized the importance of education for black women. In response to his and others’ pleas, northern white Baptists established Hartshorne Memorial College in Richmond, Virginia, for the education of black women.¹⁹

During Brooks' tenure, the church played host to prominent historical events; including the founding meeting of the National Association of Colored Women held in 1896. Brooks vigorously supported both the movement for black Baptist hegemony and higher education.²⁰ It was in this progressive environment that Nannie Helen Burroughs, noted clubwoman, educator, and suffragist, grew and thrived, mentored by Pastor Brooks. She is listed among a list of who’s who among the membership at Nineteenth Street Baptist Church. Brooks' leadership and social advocacy ushered Nineteenth Street Baptist Church into an era of prominence and activism among African American elites that continued well after his death in 1945.²¹ With such a longitudinal significance, the black church has received much attention from scholars.

¹⁸ Jacqueline M. Moore, *Leading the Race: The Transformation of the Black Elite in the Nation's Capital, 1880 – 1920* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 20 – 21.

¹⁹ Jacqueline M. Moore, *Leading the Race*, 71 – 72.

²⁰ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 182.

²¹ Robert D. Cochran, “In the House of Philemon: Connections between First Baptist Church and the African American Community, 1800 – 1875” (District of Columbia: D. C. Baptist Convention, Center for Congregational Health, Evangelism & Discipleship, 2002), 1 – 23.

Noted sociologist, E. Franklin Frazier's passions were the study of Negro life and the study of the Negro/black church. He outlines a comprehensive study in the text, *The Negro Church in America*. Frazier refers to the church of the slaves as the "invisible institution", safe and secret space blacks found to worship in outside of master's control, and the church which was organized by freed slaves after the civil war as the visible institution.²² The merging of the invisible institution and the visible institution became the "new" black church. Frazier informs the reader,

This new church raised up after Emancipation, due primarily to the split with white organizations became the economic and social; as well religious center for freed blacks, and for those recently emancipated. Their initial focus was on the family structure "the churches became and have remained [until the past twenty years or so] the most important agency of social control among Negroes. A close relationship developed between the newly structured life of the Negro and his (her) church organizations. Heretofore, blacks were not allowed to have social structure. The social culture, and any family structure had been ruined by the slavery system."²³

The push for the family, patriarchal leadership, economic stability, education, care for one another were all issues birthed for the black community through the church. Ways of being were established within the church. One's public and private decorum were a part of the social construct for blacks. The church built schools, created beneficial societies, associations for mutual aid, sickness and burial societies. Since, the Negro was isolated, denied the benefits of the larger society, when able they grouped together and formed their own society. Frazier reckons the Negro church as "a nation within a nation."²⁴ Regarding blacks and politics, Frazier reports that due to the fact that they were

²² E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1974), 36.

²³ E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*, 40.

²⁴ E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*, 42 - 47

locked out of the political arena in America, the church became their political arena.

Frazier points out that the church was the platform for men to assume leadership

positions. He states:

They had never been able to assert themselves and assume the dominant male role, even in family relations as defined by the American culture. In the Baptist churches, with their local autonomy, individual Negro preachers ruled their followers in an arbitrary manner, while the leaders in the hierarchy of the various Methodist denominations were czars, rewarding and punishing their subordinates on the basis of personal loyalties. Moreover, monetary rewards which went with power were not small when one considers the contributions of millions of Negroes and the various business activities of the churches.²⁵

Nevertheless, the church continued to evolve, continued to strive to meet the needs of the people in a hostile society. C. Eric Lincoln, writes of the black church after Frazier,

Black religion is self-consciously committed to the destruction of caste in America and is moving quite visibly in some instances, less perceptibly in others, toward the principle that Christian commitment is inconsistent with powerlessness and lack of freedom. As “white” theology has always functioned as the intellectual expression of American Christianity, the advent of black theology must be read as the determination of the Black Church to reinforce its commitment to liberation.²⁶

While this liberation encapsulated the need for freedom, the church continued to relegate the roles of women. Even today, with more and more women being called into pastoral ministry, there continues to be a great pushback within the black church of all denominations. Some are more tolerable than others, such as the United Methodist and Episcopalians, but the struggle goes on even in 2019. The Southern Baptist Conference has a provisional lock out of women in pastoral ministry. During Burroughs’s time, women stepped up into the forefront as much as possible. Women still face some barriers

²⁵ E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*, 49

²⁶ C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Church Since Frazier* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1974), 135.

in the church as well as the conferences. This occurs even though women make up the largest percentage of membership in Baptist and other denominations.

Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham supports this historical fact. She asserts, “Since women have traditionally constituted the majority of every black denomination, I present the black church not as the exclusive product of a male ministry but as the product and process of male and female interaction.”²⁷ Her work formulated in the text, *Righteous Discontent*, was designed to correct what she saw as the near exclusion of women and their contributions in most studies of the black church. She writes,

Black women expressed their discontent, with both racial and gender discrimination and demanded equal rights for blacks and women. Black women even drew upon the Bible, the most respected source within their community, to fight for women’s rights in the church and society at large. During the late nineteenth century they developed a distinct discourse of resistance, a feminist theology.²⁸

The Years of Nannie Helen Burroughs

The year that Nannie Helen Burroughs was born, a mass exodus of blacks from southern states to Kansas took place. Reconstruction, the period after the Civil War from 1865 – 1877 had just ended. Burroughs’ lifestyle was socially and economically above many. She was able attend school at all levels. She graduated from the equivalent of a high school and attended college.²⁹ Burroughs name is not as familiar on the national stage as some others. However, she is well known in the Washington, D.C. area by young and old. What is known about her? She was passionate about her people. Dr. Brooks,

²⁷ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 2.

²⁸ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 1-2.

²⁹ Rosetta E. Ross, *Witnessing & Testifying, Black Women, Religion, and Civil Rights* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 21 – 30.

pastor of Nineteenth Street Baptist church, took her under his wing and encouraged her to become a public speaker.

Most women of her time who recognized a call to preach, did not have the freedom in the black church. As a result, many became teachers.³⁰ On the issue of the black church and women, in the book “*The Black Church in the African American Experience*”, authors Lincoln and Mamiya explain:

If they could not become preachers, large numbers of religiously motivated black women felt that they were called to teach. The vocation of education attracted numerous black women because the educational needs of the black community were great, especially after the Civil War when thousands of former slaves crammed the church which often doubled as schoolhouses. Teaching was also attractive because it was considered a proper female occupation by the larger society, and in the black community teachers were highly respected.³¹

Indeed, Nannie Helen Burroughs channeled her passion and desire for change through education. She believed that through disciplined learning one could enhance one’s life. Though she was not able to use her voice in the church from the pulpit, she used it publicly. Her efforts with the National Baptist Convention were extensive. During her later years she was recognized for her contributions. The National Baptist Convention served as a catalyst for all Baptist churches. However, the NBC is not the governing arm of Baptist Churches, unlike some other denominations.

The Convention does not prescribe nor exercise administrative or doctrinal control over any of its membership; these matters are left for the attention of local organization and church authorities. The strength of the Convention lies in its ability to harness and coordinate and network the resources and efforts of its membership to accomplish goals greater than those that could be accomplished in isolation.³²

³⁰ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 283.

³¹ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 283.

³² <http://www.nationalbaptist.com/about-us/organizational-structure/index.html>.

Burroughs could not obtain a leadership role in the convention because of its adoption of much held stereotypes about women gathered from the larger society, and mimicked in the church. She found a platform for her voice. The women of the church became her bully pulpit. We will view her accomplishments and contributions through the lens of four basic steps of the non-violent campaign espoused by Dr. King.

The Four Basic Steps of a Non-Violent Campaign

King's strategic process for attacking the problem of segregation was solely the non-violent campaign. He defended his use of this tactic in his "Letter From Birmingham Jail". Dr. King wrote, "In any non-violent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts, to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification and direct-action."³³ I offer this type of strategic warfare for any issue that requires attack without the use of weapons of violence. Viewing Nannie Burroughs' attack on the lack of education, training and the uplift for her community through the lens of the non-violent campaign process provides additional insight into the awesomeness of this type of strategy. It is a strategy that can be duplicated for different purposes.

Step one involves the collection of the facts to determine whether injustices are alive. The first step seems to be pretty straightforward, but can be tricky if those in power are using judicial systems, laws and acts to subjugate persons. It seems fairly simple to determine if oppression is occurring. Some relevant questions to ask: Are people being

³³ Martin Luther King Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers Inc., 1964), 78.

dehumanized? Discriminated against? Treated unjustly? Made to suffer? Determining the answers can be complicated where those in power engage in secrecy, delay tactics, or obfuscation, but it remains a simple endeavor of gathering facts, and of personal experience.

Nannie did not have to collect facts to determine whether injustices were alive. Her life was a testimony that injustices were alive. She was a black woman who lived during the turbulent times of abject racism and prejudice. She was considered a prophetic witness and is listed in the roll of prophetic voices of African American Women.³⁴ It is written that at the age of twenty-one, Nannie H. Burroughs's oratorical skills catapulted her out of obscurity and into the midst of the struggle for women's rights. Burroughs's engaged the facts to help support her argument for the inclusion of women at the 1900 National Baptist Convention. Burroughs's direct action involved speaking out. She was not afraid as a woman to speak in male dominant environments. Higginbotham reports,

Her speech *How the Sisters Are Hindered From Helping*, at the 1900 National Baptist Convention in Richmond, Virginia launched her career. Expressing the discontent of black women and proclaiming their "burning zeal" to be coworkers with Baptist men in the Christian evangelization of the world. Burroughs appeal met with a favorable response and resulted in the NBCs approval of the establishment of the Woman's Convention (WC), Auxiliary to the NBC.³⁵

Burroughs was outspoken. Two issues she saw as hindrances to racial progress was one, the imposed color standards of blacks; and two, the lack of ambition and strategic preparedness. Always seeking to obliterate the popular conception about black

³⁴ Marcia Y. Riggs, ed. *Can I Get A Witness? Prophetic Religious Voices of African American Women, An Anthology* (New York, NY: Oris Books, 1997), 86 – 91.

³⁵ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "Religion, Politics and Gender" in *This Far By Faith: Readings in African-American Women's Religious Biography* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 142.

women, she attacked systemic prejudice within and without, and developed programs to empower women. In the speech, ‘Not Color but Character’, Burroughs addresses the issue she refers to as colorphobia.³⁶ Black women’s physical beauty and intellect was being challenged based on skin color or complexion. Lighter skinned women were deemed better and more favored than darker skinned women. Burroughs expressed her angst, “The idea of Negroes setting up a color standard is preposterous.”³⁷

Character was a much more valuable attribute than color. Secondly, she felt that black women needed to prepare themselves with training and education in order to overcome the challenges in the changing society after the war.

The training of Negro women is absolutely necessary, not only for their own salvation and the salvation of the race, but because the hour in which we live demands it. If we lose sight of the demands of the hour we blight our hope of progress. The subject of domestic science has crowded itself upon us, and unless we receive it, mast it and be wise, the next ten years will so revolutionize things we will find our women without the wherewith to support themselves.³⁸

Burroughs seemed to have been gifted with vision and insight. The apparent need for education and training, was apparent if the masses were to be successful. Her work ethic was built upon the Christian foundation of pure living. She reviled those who thought that being a domestic worker was something to scoff. She saw it as an honest way to make a living even for educated persons who could find no other employment.

³⁶ Nannie Helen Burroughs, “Not Color But Character,” in *The Voice of the Negro (July 1904)*, 277-279, quoted in *Can I Get A Witness? Prophetic Religious Voices of African American Women: An Anthology*, Marcia Y. Riggs, ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 86.

³⁷ Nannie Helen Burroughs, “Not Color But Character,” 86.

³⁸ Nannie Helen Burroughs, “The Colored Woman and Her Relation to the Domestic Problem,” *The United Negro: His Problems and Progress*, (1902), Reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969, I. Garland Penn and J.W.E. Bowen, ed., quoted in *Can I Get A Witness? Prophetic Religious Voices of African American Women: An Anthology*, Marcia Y. Riggs, ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 87.

Untrained hands however willing will find themselves unwelcome in the humblest homes. We may be careless about this matter of equipping our women for work in the homes, but if we are to judge from the wonderful progress that recent years has brought in the world of domestic labor we must admit that steps must be taken, and that at once, to train the hands of Negro for better services and their hearts for purer living.³⁹

Many black women at that time were shunning domestic work. She insisted that a well-trained woman of character was the best employee to have. Burroughs asserted, "Industry and self-respect are the only grounds of a true character."⁴⁰ Education on all levels was important to Burroughs; not just a classical education, nor an industrial one, but a social, financial, and religious education would prove the way to success. Like Dr. Martin King, Jr. she espoused progress as always moving forward. Dr. King embraced the idea, "Growth comes from struggle."⁴¹ For Burroughs racial uplift involved struggle.

Like King, Burroughs' saw achievement as a way to build a better community. The upward mobility of the race was not one sided. The burden of uplift was not just on the Negro woman, but Negro men had a role to play as well. Burroughs also urged the men of the community to play a positive role in the uplift of the race. Burroughs saw self-education as a way to conquer injustices. For Burroughs there were always avenues to side step injustice. She was hardnosed on this and had a black and white attitude about honesty, cleanliness and industry. It appears that Burroughs expected one to make a way out of no way.

³⁹ Nannie Helen Burroughs, "The Colored Woman and Her Relation to the Domestic Problem," 87.

⁴⁰ Nannie Helen Burroughs, "The Colored Woman and Her Relation to the Domestic Problem," 88.

⁴¹ Martin Luther King Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1958), 89.

Step two is all about negotiation. Negotiation is the process of discussing, compromising and bargaining with adversaries in good faith to secure a resolution to conflict and reconciliation of adversaries. A summary of Dr. King's concepts of negotiation: Negotiations must be two-sided, with both sides having equal power. Negotiations must be in good-faith. Both parties must agree to abide by the results of negotiations. If negotiations break down, action may be taken, with the purpose of getting back to the negotiation table. The word negotiation denotes an action between two parties to come to an agreement upon end; it can also mean a compromise, an accommodation, or an adjustment. When I think of negotiating, the images I receive are of moving around something, of dodging obstacles, and of managing barriers, and of resolution. Nannie Helen Burroughs negotiated the times, temperament, and tendencies of the society she in which she lived. She did it with determination.

Black women's moral and ethical base comes from a different place than the majority in American society. Katie Cannon implies it is the environment of survival and not freedom that contributes to how black women's moral and ethical decisions are made. She argues,

Black women have survived against tyrannical systems of triple oppression as a true sphere of moral life. Black women do not have the luxury of having freedom as a starting point of ethical decision-making. Freedom as a starting point for ethical decision-making is a white male construct. The real moral and ethical agency of black women's lives are minimized and trivialized, and even mocked. Black women's ethical agency in the world is shaped through, invisible dignity, quiet grace and unshouted courage.⁴²

Cannon explores three dimensions upon which black women's ethical agency is shaped. They are invisible dignity, quiet grace, and unshouted courage. She explores the three

⁴² Katie Canon, *Black Womanist Ethics* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), 4.

virtues over several chapters in the book, *Black Women's Ethics*.⁴³ Burroughs' exhibited all three of the virtues. Burroughs' *negotiated* discrimination speedbumps when seeking employment after graduating with honors from the Colored High School in Washington, DC, in 1896. She was turned down for employment in DC schools and with the federal government; an occurrence she attributed to her race. But, it did not stop her. She went to work in Philadelphia as a secretary for the National Baptist Convention's paper, the *Christian Banner*; working for the Rev. Lewis Jordan. She moved from that position to one with the Foreign Mission Board of the convention. When the organization moved to Louisville, Kentucky, in 1900, she moved there. While she could not become a part of the leadership of the National Baptist Convention, she negotiated her times and restrictions and started the Women's Convention under the auspices of the larger convention. It was the largest black women's organization in the United States.

The third step, self-purification seems rather simple to understand with regards to a non-violent campaign. Given the tension and tone of the early days of the civil rights movement, participants had to prepare themselves as soldiers for war. There was a process of disengagement both mentally, physically and spiritually. All demonstration volunteers had to commit to and sign a "Commitment Card". This form was a pledge of person and body to the nonviolent movement.⁴⁴ The importance of this commitment was overlaid by the fact that violence was an expectation; how one reacted to the violence was implicit in a non-violent campaign. Not responding to violence of any kind was considered a form of self-sacrifice. It was also a form of self-purification.

⁴³ Katie Canon, *Black Womanist Ethics*, 105 – 157.

⁴⁴ Martin Luther King Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers Inc., 1964), 63 - 64.

It was the lessons learned from these behind the scenes teachings that perhaps saved many lives. Burroughs had her own sense of self-purification. She called them the 3Bs which produced her 3Cs. Bible, bath, and broom: “clean life, clean body, and clean house.” This was her creed for self-help. She stressed that one should live a clean life, based on biblical principles. One should have a clean body and sense of regard for oneself and a clean house. Living “clean” raised one up above average. One has to look within for discipline in order to fight the good fight. In all aspects of her life, Burroughs incorporated this high standard and expectations for herself and for others.

Direct action is step four. This step is in play when a group takes an action which is intended to reveal an existing problem; then highlight an alternative, or demonstrate a possible solution to a social issue. This can include nonviolent and less often violent activities which target persons, groups, or property deemed offensive to the direct action participants. Examples of nonviolent direct action include sit-ins, strikes, workplace occupations and blockades. In the face of opposition on one hand and defense on the other, Dr. King felt that direct action was not inclusive; that indeed fighting in the court systems was also needed. In fact, he asserted direct action and the legal system could work in tandem with one another.

Direct action is not a substitute for work in the courts and halls of government. Bringing about passages of a new and broad law by a city council, state legislature or the Congress, or pleading cases before the courts of the land, does not eliminate the necessity for bringing about mass dramatization of injustice in front of a city hall. Indeed, direct action and legal action complement one another; when skillfully employed, each becomes more effective.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait*, 42.

Nannie Burroughs almost always took direct action. She utilized every opportunity that availed itself to her. She sought the assistance of others, when necessary. With the support of the Women's Convention, Burroughs launched her life's work, the founding of a school, The National Training School for Negro Women and Girls. For Burroughs', survival was in the children who needed to be taught. Her list of accomplishments are the direct actions she took or inspired others to take. From 1886 – 1961, her death, Burroughs worked tirelessly to provide leadership, direction and education for her sisters, young adults and youth. She built bridges where none had existed before by organizing and leading a branch for women at the National Baptist Convention. She dared to speak out against injustices and promoted uplift of the race. Burroughs led the Women's Convention Executive Board in calling for prayer and fasting to protest lynching, racial mob violence, and the un-democratic and un-Christian spirit the United States has shown by its discriminating and barbarous treatment of its colored people ⁴⁶ Burroughs's work included advocacy for women's suffrage and education and labor reform, and organizing for political participation. By the time of Burroughs's death in 1961 the National Training School she found and led had granted the equivalent of high school and community college degrees to over 2,000 black women from the United States, Africa, and the Caribbean. She was a powerful woman who believed in God and practiced God's way in all of her life endeavors. She epitomizes the Christian woman and lived by the commandments to love God first and to love your neighbor as yourself. Evelyn Higginbotham says this of Burroughs,

⁴⁶ Rosetta E. Ross, *Witnessing and Testifying: Black Women, Religion, and Civil Rights* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 25 – 26.

She influenced several generations of progressive race leaders both male and female by asserting the crucial relationship between religion, politics, and gender. No scholar of the black church can overlook or disregard her presence and influence. She stands among the finest representatives of the black Christian tradition. Nannie Burroughs is the feminine in our religious tradition.⁴⁷

The study of this historical figure is foundational to the D. Min. project because of the foci to continue the empowerment of women. This historical figure provides a model of how to live a life of empowerment even when faced with unsurmountable challenges. The continued empowerment will be fundamental to the well-being of the community. Women in the church have made great strides, overcome many obstacles, and have been given voice, though a whisper in some instances. Burroughs accomplishments in spite of the times she lived in serve as metaphor for faith, forgiveness, healing and wholeness. She clearly exhibited love of God, love of self and love of neighbor and hope. A hope that still strains against what seems like the same old, same old. We find ourselves today, struggling to maintain gains in the voting rights and civil rights acts. Nightly news reports provide evidence that “lynchings” are still taking place. Women are still pushing the envelope for change.

The Black Lives Matter movement led by Erica Garner and other young people continue to challenge the injustices that people of color experience on a daily basis. Ms. Garner is the oldest daughter of Eric Garner, who was killed by police in New York City on July 17, 2014. His death by police putting him in a choke hold while he repeatedly said, “I can’t breathe” (eleven times it is reported) created a national outcry. In 2017, many black men and women were killed due to police brutality. Systemic injustice has

⁴⁷ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “Religion, Politics and Gender” in *This Far By Faith: Readings in African-American Women’s Religious Biography* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), 154.

not seen any policeman convicted of the misuse of authority given to them by the state. Ms. Garner suffered a heart attack and subsequently died. No one discusses the effects of oppression and racism on the physical body. We know that it impacts the mental and emotional state of its victims. No one talks about the “Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome” most oppressed people live with in spite of and survive.

What of Nannie Helen Burroughs the woman. I have not found any writing(s) that speak of the “woman”, Nannie Helen Burroughs. Her life is a lesson in determination, like all of the other men and women who sacrifice their own lives for the sake of the whole. We are told of her activism, her passions, and her desire to help others; not of her fears, or her anxieties, or her loves. Burroughs, the woman, remains somewhat of a mystery. Some questions remain unanswered such as how did she experience womanhood? Or perhaps, was she as confident as she appeared? She never married so we may ask, if she ever was in love? Did she ever feel like giving up?

Dr. Martin Luther King shares his vulnerabilities in the episode at his kitchen table. One night after receiving numerous and vicious threats to him and his family, he finds his strength waning and wants to give up. But, the voice of Jesus speaks to him, urges him to go on with the fight. Jesus tells him he will not be alone.⁴⁸ There are many other references to his doubt, his anger, and his anxiety, but he keeps going on in love and the fight against injustice. His vulnerability is evident, but so is his courage.

Glimpses into the life and works of Nannie Helen Burroughs provide a multitude of lessons. Lessons of courage and fortitude, perseverance, faith, and belief. Her life

⁴⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1958), 124 – 125.

provides road-maps for women who must consistently perform and produce in spite of hardships, aches and pains. McCluskey writes of Burroughs in comparison to her sister school founders in “A Forgotten Sisterhood”,

Burroughs was as political as Mary McLeod Bethune but less diplomatic in her manner. While Burroughs insisted that “good Christians must have good manners, she was less concerned with the “social graces” than was Charlotte Hawkins Brown. Burroughs was as committed to her religious beliefs and core values as the very serious Lucy Laney but was more confrontational in espousing them. Burroughs stood out among the four women for delivering social critiques that were pointed and direct and left little room for diplomatic ambiguity.⁴⁹

Her works are a testament to the God she loved and served. She believed that God called and appointed her for her people. So, it is in the spirit of Nannie Helen Burroughs that this Doctor of Ministry project will be implemented. The “can do” spirit of change, healing, and uplift.

“What we take away from the past, to execute in the present, as we build the future.”
- Author unknown.

⁴⁹ Audrey Thomas McCluskey, *A Forgotten Sisterhood: Pioneering Black Women Educators and Activists in the Jim Crow South* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 103.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The fundamental theological underpinning of the project, *Broken Pieces and Soul Scars of Women: Pathways to a Shared Model of Healing* is liberation through salvation. God's redemptive power saves, forgives, redeems and restores. The act of salvation may be seen as a one-time event. However, I surmise that salvation is a process that has many events. An individual surrenders her life to Christ and so begins the Christian journey. God's power is available to the believer from the start and throughout the journey. David F. Ford's account of salvation captures the project's core value of wholeness. He explores Christian salvation and begins with a definition.

The root meaning of the word salvation is health. That has an appropriate range of reference, since health can be physical, social, political, economic, environmental, mental, spiritual, and moral. These dimensions are concerned with the whole of life in its largest context and, within that, human flourishing in particular. There are many different key terms for this besides salvation – redemption, union with the divine, freedom or liberation, enlightenment, peace, or bliss.¹

Belief and faith are the vehicles that usher in the release from bondages that beset us. We often believe and have faith, but stop short of acting in faith. Possible hindrances could be that we do not understand our faith, nor do we know how to put faith in action.

¹ David F. Ford, *Theology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999) reissued 2000, 103.

Issues of self-doubt, lack of love, and emotional and spiritual maturity, often serve as hindrances that cloud one's understanding of God's grace and mercy, and the power of the miraculous. The project hopes to serve as a bridge from brokenness to wholeness for this select group of participants. The vessel becomes stronger as each broken piece is repaired.

The word theology has many descriptions. Over the years it has been used with many adjectives; such as liberation theology, womanist theology, feminist theology, systematic theology, practical theology, process theology, and healing theology. All of which signify an expansion of the basic concepts of theology based on a particular viewpoint or concept and practice. There are theories and conceptualizations on the process of theology, the theology of politics; as well as political theology, biblical theology of the Old and New Testaments, theology of the radical involvement, black theology, a black theology of liberation, a theology for the social gospel, practical theology for black churches, black practical theology, Latin American liberation theology, and Christian theology, to name a few. Importance has been placed on context, culture, social with regards to theology. Doing theology through praxis and process has become a new norm. Working out one's discipleship through doing; as well as being and knowing, has gained monumental importance. Theology is how we come to know and understand God's will and God's ways. There are of course many other supporting resources to consult as well. Theology is how we come to know and understand God's will and God's ways. There are of course many other supporting resources to consult as well.

Definitions of theology are varied, but with fundamental principles. The Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms defines theology as, “A religious belief system about God or ultimate reality. Theology commonly refers to the ordered, systematic study or interpretation and experience of God based on God’s divine self-revelation. Theology also seeks to apply these truths to the full breath of human experience and thought”². Authors Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra in the text *Introduction to Theology*, 3rd Edition provide many concepts to the definition of theology and offer several viewpoints termed as angles. Christian theology begins with the story of the bible³. Principally Christian theology attempts to understand and interpret the stories of the bible as to what God has done and is doing. These authors refer to the bible as:

The concrete, dramatic narrative of God and the people of God, the history of Israel, the events in which God is revealed for our salvation. Where one finds the story of creation, the rebellion of humanity, the election and covenant with Israel, the coming Messiah, the reconciliation of God and humanity, the birth of the church as God’s instrument in the divine mission to the world, and the gift of the Spirit as the promise of final fulfillment.⁴

Conceptually, the authors summarized that the Christian gospel and the Christian faith are based in these stories. It is an assumption to most that the bible is the source and foundation of our understanding of God and how God interacts with God’s creation, the world and all that dwell therein. From another angle, they assert that theology is an activity of function of the Christian church carried out by the members of the church. “It is faith seeking understanding, through which the church in every age reflects on the

² Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 113.

³ Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*. 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 1.

⁴ Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 3rd ed., 1.

basis of its existence and the content of its message”⁵. We study and learn systematically of God through the Word of God, through faith and experiences. My life’s journey and ministry has indeed been one of study, growth and development. God reveals God’s self to us. God’s ways, God’s will, God’s desires are made known to those who seek Him. It is imperative that as we learn from the biblical stories. We must also learn systematically how to apply our study of God to our times and lives.

Engagement of Classical and Modern Theologians

Classical theologians such as, Paul of Tarsus, Anselm of Canterbury, Thomas Aquinas, Karl Barth and Paul Tillich have been consulted on the meaning of theology in the classical sense. Contemporary theologians such as Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, and Jürgen Moltmann have provided counter points on theology, with regards as to how God intersects with humanity. Early theologians provided classical views of theology and how the science of theology was interpreted. Regarding the importance of the image of God, deliverance and deliberation, more modern theologians have been consulted.

The voice of theologian James Cone on God and the liberation of black people in America intersects the conversation. Cone’s construct of Christian theology is,

Christian theology is a theology of liberation. It is a rational study of the being of God in the world in light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ. This means that its sole reason for existence is to put into ordered speech the meaning of God’s activity in the world, so that the community of the oppressed will recognize that its inner thrust for liberation is not only consistent with the gospel but is the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁶

⁵ Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 3rd ed., 1.

⁶ James L. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*. 40th Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 1.

Liberation theology focuses special attention on the oppressed and God's intervention in their situation. Contextual participants in the project will be largely African American women. Pivotal, wounds they have endured because of their gender will be discussed; as well as wounds from other sources such as racism, prejudice, stereotypes, etc. and many of the focus group will be women, the voices of womanist theologians will be heard. Is God's relationship to women different from God's relationship to men? Is God's relationship to black women different from that of white women?

Black women theologians Katie Geneva Canon and Stephanie Y. Mitchem will provide insight on the theology of Womanism beyond the inaugural womanist prose of Alice Walker.⁷ How does a black woman work out her soul's salvation in a white and patriarchal world? For Mitchem, it is through speaking an alternate language about God, Christ and the church; and that language is the language of womanist theology. It is the language of culture, of experience, of survival. It is God speaking my language. Mitchem argues, "Womanist theology shifts previous perspectives and asks more questions, "Where is God in the experiences of black women? By what name should this God be called? What does it mean to live a life of faith? How should black women respond to God's call?"⁸ Mitchem also offers for clarification that "Womanist theology critically draws from the many meanings of faith in the lives of black women in order to access doctrinal and ecclesial constructions and to begin reconstructions that have relevance,

⁷ Alice Walker, *In Search of our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), xi, xii. Introduces and defines the term "Womanism".

⁸ Stephanie Y. Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 23.

mean, and power in their lives, associates with and departs from Feminist theology and Black theology.⁹ Community is an essential construct of womanist theology, healing and wholeness. We find our healing in community.

Dr. King's notion of Beloved Community seems to suggest that we may be in community even when we are not aware of it, connected in unseen ways. Mothers who love their children are in community even when some mothers think that their children deserve better treatment than others because of race, ethnicity, and economic status, for example. Women may be straining in their own individuals cocoons, but will realize that others are doing the same. Yes, we have external enemies, which he suggest that we love (agape), but sometimes the enemy is ourselves. In either circumstance forgiveness is required to enable one to move on to make a Beloved Community a reality.

Undergirding the process for ongoing liberation is that of healing for the sense of the Beloved Community. The theology of Dr. Martin Luther King is paramount to the project. Martin Luther King is known generally as a Baptist preacher and activist, but he was a theologian, graduated with a Ph.D. in systematic theology in 1955. Dr. King espoused a revolutionary kind of Social Gospel that had a message of liberation. Jesus bears witness to this revolutionary theology of the social gospel. He preached service to the poor, the oppressed, the sick, and the imprisoned.

The Social Gospel was brought to the forefront of societal consciousness by Walter Rauschenbusch, who is considered to be the father of the social gospel. Rauschenbusch's theology lifted the Gospel from the page to the people; and sought to connect religion to social feelings and experiences. In the book, *A Theology for the Social*

⁹ Stephanie Y. Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology*, 46.

Gospel, Walter Rauschenbusch, writes, “The strength of our faith is in its unity. Religion wants wholeness of life. We need a rounded system of doctrine large enough to take in all our spiritual interests. In short, we need a theology large enough to contain the social gospel, and alive and productive enough not to hamper it.”¹⁰

Rauschenbusch informs the project’s pathway of social justice and community; just as Dr. Martin Luther King’s. Dr. King’s thoughtful reflection found in the text, “*Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community*, questions next steps for a country where some success has occurred regarding the civil rights of a people. Some advances appear to be merely symbolic to Dr. King, who want real life changing action and advancements to take place. Using the underpinnings of chaos to community as a metaphor for the transformation of “inner woundedness”; to that place of community within the self and through the healing; the soul scars and broken pieces is theological. God wants us whole. God wants us in community. God does not want us in chaos. The transformed inner community of body, mind and soul enhances the outer community of ones neighbors, and thus adds wholeness. Dr. King suggests that it is a realization of one’s power that can bring about a change, a deliverance. “When a people are mired in oppression they realize deliverance when they have accumulated the power to enforce change.”¹¹ The power to enforce change in one’s life comes through the Holy Spirit. Power, because of the love of God; and through the love of God. The project will provide

¹⁰ Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1996), 9.

¹¹ Martin Luther King, Jr. 1968. *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1968), 144.

the pivotal impetus for change through self-reflection and self-examination, and a desire for renewal.

Dr. King's theology was built upon God's love and God's love for his people. This love should emanate from heart to heart. A love that connects us one to another...a beloved community. Evoking the adage that each one, teach one, is another underlying principle of the project. In other words, as I learn, I am able to teach you. Not when I get perfect, but as I go, as I overcome, I have a testimony. It is Dr. King's theology of God and his love of humanity that supports the project. Luther D. Ivory writes of King:

King conceived of God as a proactive, Divine Personality working ceaselessly within the drama of a human experience to create a beloved community where the virtues of love, justice, and peace become normative for every conceivable relationship. All subsequent doctrinal understandings of Christ, the gospel, humanity, sin, and eschatology are, in fact, derivative of King's view of God. King's conception of God as "Love-in-Action proved to be the lynchpin to his theological framework. A belief in God's unfathomable and immutable love for humanity provided the basis for King's imaging of a parent God who cares for us; who would not abandon us to despair in our crises; who would provide guidance, sustenance, and companionship in the trials and tribulations of life.¹²

Ivory provides examples of King's perception of God from excerpts in his papers and speeches. As this project is an attempt to connect theology to practice through engagement in nine sessions, the voices of practical theologians are discourse. Richard R. Osmer lends the template for four core tasks of practical theology interpretation. The four tasks model can be used as a guide to develop curriculum and guide interpretation of data gathered from sessions. The four tasks are:

The descriptive-empirical task. Gathering information that helps us to discover patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts. 2) *The interpretive task.* Drawing on theories of the arts and sciences to better understand and explain why these patterns and dynamics are occurring. 3) *The normative*

¹² Luther D. Ivory, *Toward A Theology of Radical Involvement: The Theological Legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 46-47.

task. Using theological concepts to interpret particular episodes, situations, or contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide our responses, and learning from “good practice”. 4) *The pragmatic task*. Determining strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation with the “talk back” emerging when they are enacted.¹³

Osmer’s four tasks model is suggested for use by pastors and church leaders in ministry.

This is the ongoing work of practical theological interpretation. Because the project has a projected timeframe, the use of the model will be more condensed. Some of the tasks may be omitted.

Foundational Scripture

The foundational Scripture for the Healing Broken Pieces and Soul Scars study is found in the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 13:10 - 17. Some attribute the authorship to Luke, the physician, others counter that a solid identification of the author is not substantiated.¹⁴ The story of this particular miracle is not recorded in the other two synoptic Gospels.¹⁵ The pericope is recorded thusly in the *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, and is titled, Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman.

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, “Woman, you are set free from your ailment.” When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the Sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, “There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the Sabbath day.” But the

¹³ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 11.

¹⁴ John T. Carroll, *The New Interpreter’s Bible One-Volume Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 679.

¹⁵ Burton, H. Throckmorton, Jr., *Gospel Parallels: A Comparison of the Synoptic Gospels*, 5th ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1992), 128 - 129.

Lord answered him and said, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?” When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.¹⁶

This woman, like many who are sick in spirit and body, needed a transformation. Her change came through an encounter with Jesus. What happens to her embodies foundational biblical principles. The principles of healing and liberation are at play. Jesus always contended that he had come to set the captives free. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has appointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Luke 4:18, NRSV Theologically, we find an empathetic, caring God. A God who cares about the physical and emotional state of the woman. In this text, we see a God who places the woman’s wellbeing above societal mores and laws. What happens to her is a miracle.

Miracles in a Postmodern Society

The issue of miracles in a postmodern society will be introduced. Miracles are occurrences when Jesus transformed a human, place, or thing during his ministry on earth. There is support for and debate against miracles. Many have grappled with the miracle. The act prompts questions such as, how does it happen, or what is the scientific explanation for a miracle. Many theologians and scholars grapple with ‘the miracle’. A miracle provides sound evidence of God showing up, an element of God’s providence.

¹⁶ New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Something changes, something is made different by the manifestation of God, the divine in the human existence. According to the editors of the text, *Introduction to Theology*, the doctrine of providence:

Asserts that God is self-revealed as the one in control of the world and history and who wills to bring the creation, and especially each human person, to its fulfillment. Thus, the doctrine of providence combines the lordship and the love of God. God is revealed as Lord of the creation and of history, and also as loving the creation and willing its fulfillment. Because God is love. God can carry out the divine will of love in history.¹⁷

The love of God is evident in the miracle. Is God's love shown outside of the miraculous? I would give a resounding yes. But, would follow up with the question; what does one declare is outside of the miraculous. Life is miraculous. Each new day we receive the gift of life. What we do with it is another issue. Defined as God's present relation to the world, Strong's Concordance shows ten listings for the word miracle in scripture. The word miracles is listed twenty-seven times. Both references spread across the Old and New Testaments. Paul Tillich is quoted to have said, "A miracle is defined as signed events, powerful wonders that point to the Messiah"¹⁸. I submit, does not all of creation point to the Messiah?

According to Walter Brueggemann, "It is transformative events in the world that are said to occur because of the force and intentions of God's presence, purpose and power. In today's language, an event beyond our capacity to explain or understand."¹⁹ Brueggemann explains "Unlike us, the Israelites of the Old Testament were not

¹⁷ Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 2.

¹⁸ Thomas and Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 3rd ed., 131.

¹⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 130.

embarrassed by the events nor by any primary theological significance attached to them [miracles].”²⁰ In other words, they witnessed and believed. Even in the New Testament where many miracles performed by Jesus are recorded, the question of how he performed the miracle was not asked by observers or participants. There was rejoicing and exuberance from the healed, the freed, the fed, and the set free. Questions were raised concerning the timing of the performed act, but not about the action or event itself. This is unlike in past and recent years where theologians have a need to rationalize, categorize, and analyze the miracle. Faith in God produces the outcome of the miracle. There are those who take the position that even if miracles occurred in ages past, there are no miracles happening today. Brueggemann considers it an intellectual problem. He writes this offering,

A common strategy has been to measure a miracle by scientific norms. An alternative practice might be to recognize the limitation and relatively small scope of scientific rationality, to take in a different mode so much of life that operates beyond the canon of our common explanations. Israel’s attestation is so bold and so odd because it is a people unafraid of amazement and gratitude.²¹

This project will not offer debate on the idea of whether miracles occur today, but will start from the position that they do. To be able to overcome an addiction without the aid of medications or behavioral therapies after praying to God for deliverance is a miracle. Even with the aid of medications, therapy, and counseling overcoming addictions is a miracle. For many participants to be able to overcome some deep or prolonged bondage, whether immediately or strategically over time will be considered a miracle. Miracles transform. There is much about life that operates beyond our scope of

²⁰ Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith*, 130.

²¹ Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith*, 131.

understanding and reasoning. There is much that requires faith; that is, the evidence of things unseen.

Healing as a Theological Doctrine

Jesus' singular focus during the healings is magnified. All of the instances of miraculous healings in scriptures shows this singular focus. Jesus hones in on one individual and his or her situation. We get the sense that all others present are moved to the background as Jesus concentrates on the person He is attending. This sense of focus, this intense consciousness is also experienced by the reader even when there is no crowd or observers present at the scene. He heals when summoned by others, a mother or father, or sisters. He heals on the Sabbath. He heals the lame, the blind, and the infirmed. He heals those who have been burdened for years. Scriptures reveal healing stories of those who have been ill for many years. The man by the pool of Bethesda for some thirty-eight years; and the woman with the issue of blood for some twelve years. The woman in the foundations scripture had been infirmed for eighteen years. He heals by word, by laying on of hands, by command. He heals men, women, and children. Jesus performs many other types of miracles such as calming storms and turning water into wine. Healing accounts are found in the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The foundational Scripture for the project *Healing Broken Pieces: Soul Scars* is found in the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 13:10 – 17. Some attribute the authorship to Luke, the physician, others counter that a solid identification of the author is not substantiated.²²

²² John T. Carroll, *The New Interpreter's Bible One-Volume Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 679.

The story of this particular miracle is not recorded in any of the other three Gospel accounts.²³ The miracle of healing today may take other forms. The author, professor, feminist and social activist, bell hooks attests, “Healing occurs through testimony, through gathering together everything available to you and reconciling”.²⁴ She also sees healing as something done with others. “Rarely, if ever, are any of us healed in isolation. Healing is an act of communion.”²⁵ Healing is wholeness. Justice enforced and realized brings peace to the broken, the sinned against, the wounded. Dr. Andrew Sung Park, author and professor introduces the concept of *han*, the woundedness of the oppressed, poor, and ostracized. Parks defines *han* as internalized collective memory of victims generated by patriarchal tyranny, racial discrimination, economic exploitation, ethnic cleansing massacre, foreign occupation, state-sponsored terrorism and unjust war.²⁶ Victims may experience hopelessness as a result of *han* and unhealed pain. Park argues that the oppressors, the perpetrators of sin against others need salvation and the oppressed, the victims need liberation. He suggests that theology which addresses salvation for both needs to be reconsidered. The Christian doctrine of sin addresses the oppressors need for forgiveness but ignores oppressed people’s needs of justice and healing. The hopelessness caused by injustice, domestic violence, racism and fear. The theological concept of healing. Parks offers input into a new theological concept.

²³ Burton H. Throckmorton, Jr., *Gospel Parallels: A Comparison of the Synoptic Gospels*, 5th ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1992), 128 – 129.

²⁴ bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 9.

²⁵ bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2000), 215.

²⁶ Andrew Sung Park, *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 15.

To be effective, pastors have to preach on the particular pain and needs of their congregation, just as they have to know their parishioners current addresses if they are to minister to them adequately. This understanding empowers us, in turn, to more effectively make the fullness of Christian salvation and liberation real and concrete in the world of the sinned against and the sinned. By naming the reality of the suffering of victims, we can begin to heal rather than overlook or condemn them. Such a move will inaugurate a new journey to a theology of holistic salvation and liberation.²⁷

Classical and modern theologians were consulted in order to add their voices to the conversation. The addition of their ideas and theories allow for a diverse contribution.

Ultimately salvation, God's saving grace is needed for all. We are all in need of holistic salvation and liberation.

The doctrine of salvation and its theological themes of redemption, deliverance and liberation are relevant to the project. The Christian journey is the ongoing life of the believer. One encounters many bumps, bruises, mistakes, and missteps along the way. The work of Salvation is a continuous work. Through justification and sanctification by the Holy Spirit, one overcomes bit by bit. The project will seek to interject the ongoing process of sanctification unto redemption, deliverance and ultimately liberation. Karl Barth argues, salvation, is the original and basic will of God, the ground and purpose of His will as Creator. Further Barth states,

It is not that He first wills and works the being of the world and man and then ordains it to salvation. But God creates, preserves and overrules man for this prior end and with this prior purpose, that there may be a being distinct from Himself ordained for salvation, for perfect being for participation in His own being, because as the One who loves in freedom He has determined to exercise redemptive grace and that there may be an object of this His redemptive grace, a partner to receive it. . The "God with us" has nothing to do with chance. As a redemptive happening it means the revelation and confirmation of the most primitive relationship between God and man, that which was freely determined in eternity by God Himself before there was any created being. In the very fact that man is, and that he is man, he is as such chosen by God for salvation not because

²⁷ Andrew Sung Park, *From Hurt to Healing*, 32 – 33.

God owes it to him; not in virtue of any quality or capacity of his own being; completely without claim.²⁸

Generally salvation is regarded as deliverance from sin. A description in the Pocket Dictionary of Theological terms reads: “Salvation entails God’s deliverance of humans from the power and effects of sin and the fall through the work of Jesus Christ so that creation in general and humans in particular can enjoy the fullness of life intended for what God has made”.²⁹ This deliverance should always be regarded as a gift from God.

Ephesians states, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.” (Ephesians 2:8 – 10, NRSV). Salvation is the free gift of redemption and reconciliation from God to all who would believe and accept. Salvation is the gift of eternal life. Salvation is the redemptive power of God in action. Salvation is the liberator. Salvation releases one from the bondage of sin. Salvation is referred to as the act of God’s grace in delivering his people from bondage to sin and condemnation, transferring to the kingdom of His beloved Son (Colossians 1:13, NRSV) and giving them eternal life (Romans 6:23, NRSV) All of this is on the basis of what Christ accomplished in his atoning sacrifice. The wonders of salvation bought about by a single act is multiplied through continued acts of faith. Jesus’ one time act releases salvation to humankind, but it is a gift that continues.

²⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: A Selection With Introduction by Helmut Gollwitzer* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 151 - 152.

²⁹ Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki and Cherith Fee Nordling. *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 105.

The Bible says we are saved by grace through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8, translation). On *Salvation and the Christian Life*, Walter B. Shurden writes, “Salvation is not the result of human merit or achievement but of divine purpose and initiative.”³⁰ In theology, the study of salvation is called soteriology, from the Greek *soteria* meaning “salvation”. Salvation is virtually synonymous with the overall concept of redemption; and includes a past, present, and future sense. As Christians, we were saved from the penalty of sin when God brought us to faith in Christ. We are presently being saved from the power of sin as the Holy Spirit sanctifies us; and we will someday be saved from the presence of sin when we meet Christ face to face in glory. Thus, there is the initial point of salvation through Christ shed blood, and the progression of salvation in the lived out life of the believer, and the final salvation when Jesus returns. It is in the *process* of being that we find ourselves. The New Hampshire Confession states it thusly:

We believe the Scriptures teach that sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of His holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means – especially the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer and in the practice of all godly exercises and duties” Sanctification is a part of the process of Salvation which includes regeneration, repentance, justification, and adoption.³¹

Progressive, practical, experiential sanctification begins when we are born again and placed “in Christ”. The author of 2 Corinthians speaks to the wonders of the newness experienced in salvation. “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:

³⁰ Walter B. Shurden *The Baptist Identity* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 1993), 105.

³¹ Everett C. Goodwin, *The New Hiscox Guide for Baptist Churches* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1995), 267.

everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Corinthians 5:17, NRSV). Progressive sanctification is a daily dealing with our sins and growth in holiness. It is this space of in-between that we find ourselves as we watch and pray. In order to be a practitioner of the faith, there needs to be an understanding of the underlying principles and assumptions of one’s belief. This knowing seeks to serve as protection from false doctrines and teachings, and to provide clarity of witness and testimony. In response to inquiries and to skeptics, many early theologians wrote treatises to explain theological concepts. Anselm of Canterbury, a twelfth century Benedictine monk and theologian in his *Cur Deus Homo*, a historical church document, addresses God’s nature and character. His method was a question and answer format. Thomas Aquinas, thirteenth century Dominican friar, Catholic priest and Doctor of the church, also wrote on the existence of God. His work was an instruction guide for the church, the *Summa Theologica*. This classic is written in the three part dialectical argument structure. The narrative includes a thesis, and antithesis, counterpoint to the argument, and synthesis, two opposing views of doctrine. Aquinas offers five ways as proof of God’s existence.³² While acknowledging God’s existence may seem to be a given for the participants, we will address this with certainty. These classics remain solidly in the reservoir of Christian resources.

Secondly, receiving the truth of God’s love encapsulated in being made in God’s image is instrumental in raising one’s awareness of self-value. As the trauma of low self-esteem is addressed, the notion that we are created in God’s image....that we are wondrously and perfectly made will be emphasized. How God sees us is paramount to

³² John W Coakley and Andrea Sterk eds. *Readings in World Christian History: Volume 1: Earliest Christianity to 1453* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 359 - 362.

whatever image man puts forward. We find God saying, in the creation story in Genesis 1:6, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” God saying let us make man in our own image” (NRSV). Commentators suggest that the image or likeness of God refers to God’s call for humans to be living images or likenesses of God and extensions of God’s dominion over all the earth. Humans are created together in community from the very beginning with both genders reflecting the “image of God”. “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27, NRSV).³³ Another underlying theological principle is that of God’s love. Salvation is a gift from the love of God. Jesus insisted that our love of God was coupled with the love of neighbor, and I add the love of self. Love of other was a driving force for Dr. Martin Luther King.

Love as a Theological Principle

It is written that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s theological belief rest on his understanding of the interdependence of all life. A quote from his sermon “The Man Who Was A Fool”, subscribes to the notion that we are all tied together. “All men [women] are caught in an escapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.”³⁴ Consider first, in

³³ Dennis T. Olson, *The New Interpreter’s Bible: One Volume Commentary*. Beverly Roberts Gaventa and David Petersen, eds. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 4.

³⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr. *Strength To Love* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), ix.

order to see oneself as marvelously made, is to see oneself forgiven; and to know the love of God, to know that in spite of our fallen state, our disobediences, God forgives the repentant wrongdoer, the sin and the sinner. Consider also that I am required to love myself just as I am required to love the other, the neighbor. Jesus states that the two greatest commandments are 1) “To love the Lord your God with all you heart and with all of your soul and with all of your mind” (Matthew 22:37 – 38, NRSV). The second is like he says, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22: 39, NRSV). Jesus speaks many times about love. “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15, NRSV). “And this is love, that we follow his commandments; this is the commandment, as you have heard from the beginning, that you follow love” (2 John: 6, NRSV). “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments” (1 John 5:2-3, NRSV). “This is my commandment that you love one another just as I have loved you” (John 15:12, NRSV).

Love is summed up in 1 Corinthians 13. The Apostle Paul writes the actions that belie love and clarifies the conditions of love. Even the gifts of the Holy Spirit are empty without love he implies.

“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1- 3, NRSV).

The Apostle then defines love. He makes it plain that love does not hurt:

“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things,

hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end” (1 Corinthians 13:4 – 8, NRSV).

Love was exhibited in the healings that Jesus performed. I believe there were many more healings that took place than were recorded. Each of the healings in the Gospels is like a message to God’s people. When we examine all aspects of the healing and asks questions such as why did the healing take place, who was the beneficiary, what was the person healed of, and when did the healing take place, we find messages aside from the physical healing. Just as Jesus tells the disciples to feed the hungry and then minister to them. We see physical healing leads to faith in the Kingdom God. Love desires good for all. Love forgives. This kind of love is not a sappy emotion. Dr. King referred to it as “*agape*”.

In speaking of love, we are not referring to some sentimental emotion. It would be nonsense to urge men to love their oppressors in an affectionate sense. When we speak of loving those who oppose us, we speak of a love which is expressed in the Greek word Agape. Agape means nothing sentimental or basically affectionate; it means understanding, redeeming goodwill for all men [women], it is an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return.³⁵

We love because God’s love is operating in us. This love produces the interconnectivity, echoes Jesus’ voice in loving neighbor as self. The Healing Broken Pieces and Soul Scars project will strive to get participants see that we are inescapably tied together, bound by the love of Christ. As Dr. King stated in *Where Do We Go From Here: Community or Chaos*, “In a real sense, all life is interrelated. The agony of the poor impoverishes the rich; the betterment of the poor enriches the rich. We are inevitably our brother’s [sister’s] keeper because we are our brother’s brother [sister’s sister]. Whatever

³⁵ James M. Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 8 – 9.

affects one directly affects all indirectly³⁶. I attest, we need to be made whole in order to be whole. Hands down, communal healing is the root of this project. Professor bell hooks echoes in agreement:

When we heal the woundedness inside us, when we attend to the inner love-seeking, love-starved child, we make ourselves ready to enter more fully into community. We can experience the totality of life because we have become fully life-affirming. Like our ancestors using our powers to the fullest, we share the secrets of healing and come to know sustained joy.³⁷

Finally, we must consult womanist theology. Whether we call it womanist, feminist, or feminist liberation theology, we must look at the perception of God's relationship with women. Does God relate differently to men than with women? Does God relate differently to white women versus women of color specifically, African American women? Does the Providential God who announced God's self in the history of creation, who stepped into humanity, only allows God's self to be experienced through the eyes of men, the rich, and those in power? The assertions of feminist and womanist theology decry the idea. The cry for gender equality has been loud and strong for many years. Gender equality in the home, gender equality in the street, gender equality on the job, and gender equality in the church.³⁸ We must admit there is a skewed rationality for all life where men are the head and heralds of the society. Scholarly work is still being done regarding this monumental issue.

³⁶ James M. Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope*, 626.

³⁷ bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 146 - 147.

³⁸ Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828 – 1860* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 14, 17.

Professor and author, Imani Perry examines global patriarchy in the book, *Vexy Thing*. She suggests that we read everything through a feminist liberation lens, and declares of her text:

I am inviting readers (of this text and of the world around them) to conceive of feminism not primarily as a set of positions or doctrines but as a critical practice for understanding and working against gendered forms of domination and exploitation. This is a book that asks readers to engage in this critical reading practice with the stories, events and cases presented.³⁹

In her text she asserts that literature was a vehicle that promoted patriarchal global dominance. Domination grew under a structure of patriarchal authority that was globally imposed during the age of empire. The bible is viewed by many as one of the major proponents of this literary rendering. Does the church continue to support gender issues as put forth by patriarchs? How does the church spiritually nurture women whom the world has traditionally subjugated to a position of lesser value? The bent over woman's gender was not an issue in her healing. Jesus' relationship with women in the bible was not adversarial.

In summary, the theological foundations for the project are based on the study and understanding of God, who God is, and the relationship of God and humanity, and on the gift of salvation. The theological doctrine of salvation is used expressly to convey God's abiding love for humanity; in that the culmination of God's desire for a broken creature to be made whole again was in God's heart. Salvation was achieved through the act of the death on the cross of Jesus, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only son." (John 3:16, NRSV) It is available for all who believe and accept Christ as Savior. It

³⁹ Imani Perry, *Vexy Thing: On Gender and Liberation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 7-8.

is the gift of God. Salvation is progressive. Once the initial salvation has occurred through the help of the Holy Spirit, believers must continue to work out their salvation. God wants us whole and not broken, restored unto God's self. Life is full of suffering, hurt and pain that impacts our very souls, but God wants us healed. Trusting the theological disciplines of love, healing, and forgiveness, help us to release and let go of the past. I offer when one understands the systemic construct of God and God in the world, transformation will occur. When we accept God's love and desire to live a life that is pleasing to God then healing becomes a reality. We are not to be bound by sin; nor the disobedience and turning away from God's will to our own will and way. Central to ongoing sanctification are repentance and forgiveness. One has to believe that God forgives and therefore learn to forgive themselves and others. Theologian Paul Tillich, writes theoretically about forgiveness, "For forgiveness means reconciliation in spite of estrangement; it means reunion in spite of hostility; it means acceptance to those who are unacceptable, and it means reception of those who are rejected. God's forgiveness is independent of anything we do, even of self-accusation and self-humiliation."⁴⁰

Understanding, accepting and receiving the theological disciplines of love, healing, and forgiveness are fundamental to the project. The voices of several classical and contemporary theologians will provide clarity through specific lens of interpretation. Womanists, biblical, and practical theologians will be partners in the exercise to help women discover and encounter the broken pieces in their souls and to mend them through the lens of various classical and contemporary theologians of the project. This project

⁴⁰ Paul Tillich, *The New Being* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 4-5.

focuses will be on the theological disciplines of salvation, sanctification, healing, love, and forgiveness.

Through a specific lens we will explore the inner sanctums of one's soul with the express purpose to allow God to show us the way to wholeness. Our goal is to listen to God's will for our lives and to strive to live that will, not religiosity, but a divine way of life. As we encounter God in our valleys and are raised out of them, we will be able to share without guilt or condemnation with our sister. Martin Luther King writes a response to his critics from a Birmingham jail. He was criticized for not waiting by the white clergy. He speaks to interconnectivity. The interconnectivity I suggest exists among sisters. He writes,

...I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives in the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere in this country."⁴¹

The essence of what King was saying is that in a real sense, all life is interrelated. The project will be implemented with the goal of wholeness through regeneration and liberation. The objective is to be free through soul healing. Jesus healed many persons who had been ill, for a long time, which indicates that there is no time cap on when a person may be healed. The concepts of faith, healing, forgiveness, liberation and empowerment will be the predominant Christian themes. Other disciplines speak to the need for healing, particularly the psychological and medical sciences and the practice of

⁴¹ Martin Luther King Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1964), 77.

treatment. The interconnectedness of mind, body and soul has been researched over time.

The theoretical chapter will highlight how other disciplines look at wholeness.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

This theoretical foundations chapter provides the necessary connection between theory, research and practice. The theoretical approach to the Broken Pieces and Soul Scars of Women: Pathways to a Shared Journey of Healing study is fundamentally spiritual. The project encompasses the assumptions that hurt women who come together in a supportive, safe and sacred space can begin a process of healing. An important variable to the project is the group setting and its implications of supportive healing. An ordered series of pathways will guide participants through principles of health and wellbeing. All therapies are developed as a result of a theory. A theory, idea, or hypothesis prompts study and research, which provides the impetus for practice. Other disciplines, particular in the behavioral sciences have been consulted in order to broaden and deepen a comprehensive look at healing practices and processes.

The theoretical framework encapsulates a broader interdisciplinary scope on healing from inner hurts as viewed specifically in psychology, Humanist Psychology and Womanist social theory. In addition, theoretical frameworks on spirituality and narrative theory are added to the conversation. These areas speak to the importance of spirituality (one's belief system) and narrative (the sharing and writing of story) to one's well-being. Spirituality, as religion, and the intersection of individual change and health will be

explored. The theory that birthed narrative therapy, the importance of stories that shape thoughts and behaviors will also be reviewed.

The American Psychological Association's APA Dictionary of Psychology defines a theory as "A principle or body of interrelated principles that purports to explain or predict a number of interrelated phenomena."¹ Schneider and Krug, provide description of theory as it pertains to psychotherapy in the text, *Existential-Humanistic Therapy*.

In psychotherapy, a theory is a set of principles used to explain human thought and behavior, including what causes people to change. In practice, a theory creates the goals of therapy and specifies how to pursue them. Furthermore, a theory guides action toward successful outcomes while generating hope in both therapist and client that recovery is possible.²

This project is not clinical in nature and participants are not clients. However, goals of recovery i.e. healing are expected. Schneider and Krug argue that different schools of theory are commonly referred to as waves. Five waves are listed, 1) psychodynamic theories (i.e., Adlerian, psychoanalytic), the second wave learning theories (i.e., behavioral, cognitive), the third wave humanistic theories (person-centered, gestalt, existential), the fourth wave feminist and multicultural theories, and the fifth wave postmodern and constructivist theories (i.e., narrative, solution-focused).³ Humanistic, multicultural (I add womanist theory to this wave), and postmodern and constructivist theories will provide an overview and foundation for the theoretical framework. The

¹ Gary R. VandenBos, ed., *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2015), 1081.

² Kirk J. Schneider and Orah T. King, *Existential Humanistic Therapy*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2017), x.

³ Schneider and King, *Existential Humanist Therapy*, x.

project is focused on the individual's life experiences which shape identity, and story.

How these experiences become reality, good or bad, will be addressed. Perceived realities will be examined for validity. These schools of theory will guide the renaming, reshaping and retelling of experiences and perceived realities and conceptions.

Theoretical Foundations in Ministry Practice

Spirituality has always been a significant part of the African American woman's experience. One may go back to the time when she was forcefully dragged from her homeland. Endurance in an oppressive land required a deep inner resilience for survival. Spirituality was found in the connection with the earth, around the kitchen table, mother with, and through tribal religions and Afro Christianity. Mechal Sobel's *Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith*, provides an in-depth report on the spirituality of the West African before slavery. Sobel summarizes that the spiritual worldview continued after transportation to the shores of America.⁴

Professor David R. Hodge developed a theoretical framework on spirituality. This framework highlights the importance of spirituality in fostering individual change. Hodge offers a definition of spirituality as it relates to his paper.

Spirituality is defined as a relationship with a Transcendent Being (or whatever is considered Ultimate), informed by a certain spiritual tradition, which fosters a sense of meaning, purpose, and mission in life. In turn this relationship produces

⁴ Mechal Sobel, *Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 3 – 21.

fruit, such as altruism, love, forgiveness, etc., which has a discernible effect upon one's relationship to creation, self, others, and the Ultimate.⁵

According to Hodge, the diversity of the beneficial relationships spirituality engenders is extensive. He references various studies. For example, spiritually has been positively associated with successful aging, satisfying marriages, interpersonal friendliness, resiliency, coping and minority leadership. It has also been associated with decreased rates of substance abuse, mortality, morbidity, recovery from divorce, and sexual assault.⁶ His framework is comprised of seven discrete explanatory mechanism, or pathways, through which spirituality engender salutary outcomes. Hodge subscribes to Maslow's theory that a human being needs a spiritually based cognitive framework to live by and understand by, in about the same sense that he needs sunlight, calcium or love. Belief systems in conjunction with the faith that animates them, have demonstrated both protective and curative properties.⁷

In essence one's spirituality, belief, faith can indeed prove to be the "Balm in Gilead" needed to heal the sin sick soul. Reference to the balm of Gilead is made three times in the Old Testament of the Bible. The verse found in the book of Jeremiah 8:21-22 (KJV) reads, "For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?" Balm from Gilead was thought to have healing powers. The writer is asking do

⁵ David R. Hodge, "Spirituality: Towards a Theoretical Framework", *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work* 19, no.4 (January 2000): 1-20, accessed October 16, 2019, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15426432.2000.9960127>.

⁶ David R. Hodge, "Spirituality: Towards a Theoretical Framework", 3-4.

⁷ David R. Hodge, "Spirituality: Towards a Theoretical Framework", 7.

you not have any balm or physician. If you do then why is my daughter still hurt?

Spiritually encompasses, belief and practice.

Prayer, a practice of religion and spirituality has also been researched through a scientific theoretical lens. In the text, *The Psychology of Prayer*, the authors Spilka and Ladd provide a scientific view on prayer. They theorize that the benefits of prayer can be measured. It is suggested that it is critical for scholars to appreciate the multi-dimensional aspects of prayer and the act of praying. Prayer has significant role in coping with life's problems.⁸ While prayer is viewed as a pragmatic, hands-on, applied practice; these two authors have applied a scientific theoretical framework to prayer. Study affirms the positive aspects of prayer that includes among many, well-being. Prayer has many factors that can be measured.

A scientific orientation to prayer affirms that prayer is central to the psychology of religion. Matters of individual development, coping, adjustment, well-being, social life and health are connected to prayer. Prayer is the psychology of religion in action and literally reflects virtually every facet of behavior scientific psychology from its neural roots to complex social responsibility.⁹

The theoretical frameworks of spirituality and prayer will undergird the "Mindful Transformation" project. The participant's belief systems will be called into play when discussing the imprints of trauma on the body, mind, and soul. The discipline of prayer as an instrument and tool of survival will be interspersed throughout the study. We will pray for inner healing, for the healing and wholeness of the wounded and broken places within

⁸ Bernard Spilka and Kevin L. Ladd, *The Psychology of Prayer: A Scientific Approach* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2013), 2.

⁹ Spilka and Ladd, *The Psychology of Prayer: A Scientific Approach*, 2.

us. We will seek to activate the faith needed to believe that God hears and answers prayers through the pathways to wholeness. There are many dimensions to the healing process. In addition to the scientific theory of spirituality and the psychology of prayer we will investigate the theory of narrative (storytelling) and how it will shape the healing process.

The narrative theory deals with the importance of stories in shaping realities. Jill Freedman and Gene Combs in *Narrative Therapy* write of American psychologist and psychiatrist Milton Erickson's model of making therapy fit the person. It was his use of story that got the two therapists interested in further study of narrative therapy. "It was through Erickson that we first encountered the belief that people can continually and actively re-author their lives."¹⁰ It is important to note that many participants are still living with the realities of an event that may have happened months even years ago. However, when verbalizing or writing about an event, emotions associated with it may be felt in the present.

In 1990, Michael White and David Epston introduced ground breaking theory on people's problems and the stories of their lives. The author's assumption is that people experience problems when the stories of their lives, as they or others have invented them, do not sufficiently represent their lived experience. "In order to make sense of our lives and express ourselves, experience must be "storied" and it is this storying that determines the meaning ascribed to experience. Accordingly, narrative therapy becomes a process of

¹⁰ Jill Freedman and Gene Combs, *Narrative Therapy: The Social Construction of Preferred Realities* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 11.

storying or re-storying lives and experiences.”¹¹ Verbal or written stories are integrated into the therapy for healing. Telling our stories are freeing. When we release what has been bottled up inside, the plot may not change but our reaction and response may. Richard Stone opines, “To stand face to face with our pains and wounds requires great courage and a deep willingness to forgive. It also demands of us that we open ourselves up to being changed in unpredictable ways by the re-storying of our lives.”¹² The theory that sharing story is an avenue toward healing has been researched by many. Therapist use various methods and techniques that involve story telling in their practice. My hypothesis is that through shared stories, in a safe and sacred space, healing occurs.

There is a need to build an environment that is conducive to learning and training, which provides space for implementation. Deep and honest reflection revealed the scars of my own heart wounds. These wounds are not debilitating, and did not produce psychotic residue; however, a portion of my heart/soul was blocked, shut off from myself and from others. Even after having been in the church for a number of years, I have not shared my story in a way that has liberated me from past feelings. This ministry will not only provide pathways for other women, but for me the creator and facilitator as well. When I stand before others I will be able to share my story and heal those places of hurt along with others. I will join the group of women who need to address their concerns, and their pain. I will join a group of women who are longing to transform their lives. “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds” (Romans 12:2, KJV). Through a process of

¹¹ Michael White and David Epston, *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), 10.

¹² Richard Stone, *The Healing Art of Storytelling: A Sacred Journey of Personal Discovery* (New York, NY: Authors Choice Press, 2004), 168.

mindful transformation, healing, wholeness and empowerment can take place in the soul of the woman. Mindful transformation is a pathway model that focuses on a shared story or testimony. It looks holistically inward and reflects outward. Mindful transformation toward wholeness is an intentional process.

Margaret Kornfeld provides a practical explanation from a counseling perspective. It is found in her Five Step Solution-Focused Treatment Model. Step III, Orienting the Client toward Solutions, Question 4 asks, “What else will be different after the miracle?” Kornfeld writes, “The intent of the question is to force clients to think about, expand and simplify what they would like to be different. The more clearly they are able to picture the differences they desire, the greater chance they will have in reaching their goals and experiencing satisfaction.”¹³

Amy Oden speaks to Christian Mindfulness in the text, *Right Here, Right Now*. “Jesus calls us to pay attention to the present moment because that is where the reign of God is, in the here and now. Be mindful of here and now, what is truly important. She continues, that Jesus describes mindfulness in his parables about staying awake. Many people miss out because they fall asleep. Jesus uses “awake” to describe being aware or attentive or mindful”.¹⁴ There are so many distractions today. We must remain awake to what is going on around us. “Christian mindfulness is not some generic practice as an end in itself, but a practice that turns us towards God. As Christians we proclaim God is present in all things. Our entire mundane, daily, messy life rests in God. The goal of

¹³ Margaret Zipse Kornfeld, *Cultivating Wholeness: A Guide to Care and Counseling in Faith Communities* (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009), 127- 128.

¹⁴ Amy G. Oden, *Right Here, Right Now: The Practice of Christian Mindfulness* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2017), 6-7.

Christian mindfulness is God-awareness.”¹⁵ Mindfulness transformation may occur as the result of an encounter that includes communal engagement with other women, creation and God. It builds on knowledge, faith and trust. Mindful transformation through shared story should compel us toward active engagement in the world. Mindful transformation encompasses at least five components: mindful spiritual reframing, mindful self-love, mindful forgiveness, mindful storytelling, and mindful purpose.

Mindful spiritual reframing encompasses a womanist theoretical focus. It requires us to look through a different lens. Womanist theories are based on the unique and specific relationship that African American women have with God and the world in which they live. Thema Bryant-Davis and Lillian Comas-Diaz provide an overview of two emerging and intersecting psychological frameworks: womanist psychology and mujerista psychology. In the text, *Womanist and Mujerista Psychologies* they explore African American and Latina women ways of survival in oppressive environments and relationships. Several descriptions of womanism and are offered.

Womanism moves toward an integrated perspective and analysis. The womanist perspective maintains that addressing racism, ethnocentrism, and poverty is equally important as addressing gender issues, such as sexism. Similar to Black theology, certain aspects of womanism are liberation, self-determination, and the humanity of all people with special attention to those who have been dehumanized. Similar to feminism, womanism honors women’s multiple ways of knowing, including the valuing of spirit and the unspoken. Womanism is holistic in its recognition and celebration of the various aspects of black female identity. Despite the realities of oppression a womanist recognizes her divine identity as a living reflection of powerful good on the earth.¹⁶

¹⁵ Amy G. Oden, *Right Here, Right Now*, 14-15.

¹⁶ Thema Bryant-Davis and Lillian Comas-Diaz, ed., *Womanist and Mujerista Psychologies* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2016), 6.

The womanist focus is not individualistic. Bryant-Davis and Comas-Diaz contend, “Womanists are also collectivistic and community oriented in that the focus of womanism moves beyond individual well-being to encompass the well-being of entire peoples and communities and then to humanity overall.”¹⁷ Womanist and mujerista psychologies have specific aims.

Womanist and mujerista psychologies centralize the need to focus on the self-definition and art of healing Black women and Latinas as they strive to survive, grow, and thrive in the face of multiple, intersecting forms of oppression. Womanist and mujerista psychologies focus on emotional healing from a psychospiritual perspective that connects with transpersonal thought. Womanist and mujerista psychologies maintain that three of the tasks central for wholeness and well-being are self-determination, self-empowerment, and critical awareness.¹⁸

Several contributors’ viewpoints to womanist theory are listed.

Womanist theory is said to have significant connections to African psychology and positive psychology. Womanism is a metatheory comprised of spiritual/religion, cultural studies, history, education, indigenous and non-Western healing traditions, art, politics, psychology, anthropology, and sociology among others. Womanist theory is culturally based and strengths-based in that its focus goes beyond pathology and oppression to the development of optimal psychological and collective well-being of African –descended women and all of humanity, across race and gender lines. Womanist psychological theory is a liberation-based approach that is based in the idea that difference does not equal deviance. The source of womanist and mujerista metatheory is the lived experience of women of color. A womanist theory articulates how women of color can rescue and preserve their history and improve their traditions. Womanist and mujerista psychologies are the daughters of the marriage between psychology and spirituality.¹⁹

¹⁷ Thema Bryant-Davis and Lillian Comas-Diaz, ed., *Womanist and Mujerista Psychologies*, 6.

¹⁸ Thema Bryant-Davis and Lillian Comas-Diaz, ed., *Womanist and Mujerista Psychologies*, 8-9.

¹⁹ Thema Bryant-Davis and Lillian Comas-Diaz, ed., *Womanist and Mujerista Psychologies*, 11.

It is with this theoretical and psychological information the womanism platform will inform the project. The womanist psychological methodology is interwoven into the Mindful Transformation project. “It entails a participatory, inclusive, and liberating orientation. It aims to help women re-story and re-author their lives, engage in liberating expressions, and commit to social justice.”²⁰

The significance of reframing is to get from good to great. Greatness is found inside of each woman regardless of the circumstances or conditions that may imply otherwise. Remembered strength, generational strength, God-given strength needs to be revisited. I say to the women, lift up your head, square your shoulders, and continue to fight the good fight. As an interpretive principle, the black womanist tradition provides the incentive to chip away at oppressive structures, bit by bit. Canon claims the benefits of a womanist consciousness:

It identifies those texts that help Black womanist to celebrate and rename the innumerable incidents of unpredictability in empowering ways. The Black womanist identifies with those biblical characters who hold on to life in the face of formidable oppression. Often compelled to act or to refrain from acting in accordance with the powers and principalities of the external world, Black womanist search the Scriptures to learn how to dispel the threat of death in order to seize the present life.²¹

Mindful self-love will be examined through a series of questions. Self-love is not a narcissistic, excessive interest in self. It is not an over inflated ego. I surmise persons need to love themselves before they can love others. Author bell hooks writes of love in the book, *All About Love, New Visions*. She subscribes to the notion that love is

²⁰ Thema Bryant-Davis and Lillian Comas-Diaz, ed., *Womanist and Mujerista Psychologies*, 13.

²¹ Katie Geneva Canon, *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community* (New York, NY: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1995), 56.

not a feeling. She writes “To truly love we must learn to mix various ingredients, care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment, and trust, as well as honest and open communication.”²² I suggest these variables are normally what we subscribe for others. What if we applied these variables to self before others? “When we understand love as the will to nurture our own and another’s spiritual growth, it becomes clear that we cannot claim love if we are hurtful and abusive”, writes hooks.²³ I assert, if we have been abused there must be forgiveness and reconciliation. Themes of strength and self-assurance and self-knowledge are embossed in self-love. Self-love, then is not predicated on the results of victimization, or on abuse from the mouths or hands of others. Womanism teaches that self-love is due because of faith and hope, audaciousness, and courageousness. I contend that self-knowledge, self-ownership, and self-acceptance start with inner thoughts, in the mind. The sense of self protects even in the midst of adversity.

Mindful forgiveness requires alert attentiveness. Forgiveness is an extension of grace to the offender for a relationship that has been ruptured due to the violation or sin of one party against the other. Forgiveness does not cancel, nor dismiss, minimize, ignore, or forget the pain. Being able to forgive a perpetrator allows healing. Forgiveness does not seek vengeance. “Vengeance is mine says the Lord.” (Romans 12:19, NRSV). Forgiveness is one of the pillars of the Christian charter. Christians learn that the ultimate forgiveness paved the way for reconciliation, redemption, and reward. God’s forgiveness of human sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus reconciled man back to God.

²² bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2001), 5.

²³ bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions*, 6.

God's forgiveness established a pathway of redemption for a broken relationship. God's forgiveness of sin provides the reward of eternal life for the believer. Unforgiveness keeps one in bondage.

Dr. Martin Luther King, in the text *Strength to Love*, stresses that "Forgiveness is a catalyst creating the atmosphere necessary for a fresh start and a new beginning. It is the lifting of a burden or the canceling of a debt."²⁴ Forgiveness is releasing the other or others emotionally of a wrongdoing, either actual or perceived. Most are aware of the inner conflict of knowing that forgiveness is due and yet finding it to be a real challenge. Yet, we are reminded by Jesus to love our enemies. This is not something that one can do on just human strength alone, but requires the aid of the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God. Dr. King reminds us that we live in a world that practices not forgiving. In fact, he declares, "We live according to the philosophy that life is a matter of getting even and of saving face. We bow before the altar of revenge."²⁵

Learning to forgive will be paramount to pathways of healing. Desiring to forgive, letting go of being the wronged person, leads to wholeness. For most of us, it is a difficult and challenging thing to do. But forgiveness leads to reconciliation. Therein lies the theological benefits of forgiveness. Forgiveness leads to reconciliation; and reconciliation to salvation; and salvation to liberation.

Mindful storytelling is being able to tell one's story verbally or in written narrative with the purpose of releasing. Several stories will be presented as formational groundwork. One must learn to accept one's story as a part of life experience,

²⁴ Martin Luther King Jr., *Strength to Love* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press Gift Ed., 2010), 45.

²⁵ Martin Luther King Jr., *Strength to Love*, 35.

incorporating the fragmented parts into the entire fabric of one's life is healing. Hurt people tend to fragment their being. Because of hurt and trauma, some parts of consciousness may be denied or suppressed. Rust, if not deterred, will take over an object. Sharing, through storytelling, testifying, witnessing or declaring may be a deterrent to stop the rust of past hurts and pain in our lives. Sharing is an important tool in the life of the Christian. Our testimony of God's grace and mercy in our lives helps to spread the Gospel and win disciples to Christ. Locked places in the heart, kept secrets, harbored silences, an unspoken past haunts the present and perpetuates empty spaces in our lives. The Me Too Movement has provided a platform for a groundswell of people coming forward to tell their story. One story inspires the sharing of another, and another, and another. Is there benefit in the story? I believe that there is tremendous benefit. Out of experience, the story, the narrative evolves. It is that shared experience that binds, that forms, and links persons from different socioeconomic backgrounds, class and even race. We tend to live our lives in compartmentalized silos. I have come to realize that the world in our mind is ours alone.

We carry burdens of containers that hold only our wounds. Mindful sharing, in safe and sacred space among trusted others, may birth and provide healing for others. How I overcame may help another to see a way to overcome. "By the word of their testimony" (Revelation 12:11, NIV). Importantly to me are the lessons the story provides. If I examine the story objectively, what does it teach me? How can my shared story help someone else out of an abyss?

Out of Lisa M. Hess' story comes a path of devotion in conscious love.²⁶ Dr.

Hess shares a story of an experience that damaged her emotionally. The incident caused her to leave her church. She shared ways that she sought to escape the pain, and in doing so connected to others and their ways of seeking that were vastly different from her own. Ultimately, forgiveness and reconciliation took place. However, out of the experience, lessons learned produced a practice that involved widening community and renewed sense of self. The lessons and practice is found in her text, *A Companionable Way*.

Monica A. Coleman takes us on a journey of her discovery of being bi-polar and depression in the narrative, *Bipolar Faith*.²⁷ She reveals other traumatic events that occur in her life. Through analysis and diagnoses, through a minefield of twist and turns, we share her life of discovery. Coleman shares that she lost her faith and regained it. She informs the reader of the way God reappeared in her life. Painful past events in her life are processed. Coleman writes, "The most I can do is mourn, remember, and turn the corner to a new life"²⁸. Her realization that nothing she can do to change conditions and situations in her life are lessons for each of us. I agree that Coleman's declaration to mourn, remember and turn the corner to new life begins with sharing the story. The story that shame, guilt, and fear has prevented us from telling. Finding oneself, taking oneself back from the obis through faith, prayer and community involves what Dianne M.

²⁶ Lisa M. Hess, *A Companionable Way: Path of Devotion in Conscious Love* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 11 - 12.

²⁷ Monica A. Coleman, *Bipolar Faith: A Black Woman's Journey with Depression and Faith* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016), 339.

²⁸ Monica A. Coleman, *Bipolar Faith*, 339.

Stewart professor and womanist author refers to as Black Women Home. This is found in Alice Walker's womanist definition. For Stewart, "this call transports one back to roots, childhood, community and culture. It is to be sensual, to respect, and rejoice in the force of life, of life itself; and to be present in all that one does, from the effort of loving to the breaking of bread."²⁹ Coleman's journey embodies the motifs of self-repossession and self-determination in the womanist tradition.

These motifs challenge each womanist scholar to wrestle with her fractured identity and occasion the reprieve of going home by way of a distinct passage.³⁰ I assert that "going home" is related to transformation and wholeness. Renita Weems, shares a haunting memoir, *Listening for God*, which speaks to a time when God is absent from her life; even though she is a minister and continues to serve and preach and appear outwardly that everything is okay. Weems confesses that two things helped her during this period. "Two things kept me afloat during that period in my life."³¹ One, she said was her own honesty. She wrote that she at first tried to lie about the state in which she found herself. The second, she said, "Was the honesty of others who had survived similar periods in their spiritual journey. Had it not been for the stories of others who have endured seasons of silence between God and themselves, I would have felt hopefully

²⁹ Diane M. Stewart, "Dancing Limbo: Black Passages through the Boundaries of Place, Race, Class, and Religion", in *Deeper Shades of Womanism in Religion and Society*, ed. Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006), 83 – 85.

³⁰ Diane M. Stewart, "Dancing Limbo", 83 – 85.

³¹ Renita J. Weems, *Listening for God: A Minister's Journey Through Silence & Doubt* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 2000), 16.

alone”.³² We are not created to live our lives in silos. I add that the Holy Spirit connects us with God and each other.

On honesty, bell hooks, a womanist scholar writes, that “learning to be honest must take place in situations where one also learns to confront the question of shame”³³. She echoes the premise of this study by her written statement, “Many black women in the United States are brokenhearted. They walk around in daily life carrying so much hurt, feeling wasted, yet pretending in every area of their life that everything is under control. She continues, it hurts to pretend. It hurts to live with lies.”³⁴

Finally, mindful purpose focuses on the why of our existence. Why am I here? What is God’s purpose for my life? All manner of obstacles get in the way of our intended divine purpose. I believe that if we look back over our lives and see God even in the worst part of our lives we can endeavor to hope, endeavor to press on, and endeavor to serve God. “All things work together for the good of them that love the Lord and are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28, New King James Version).

Jennifer Jill Schwirzer’s work has produced a thirteen week process to peace. Her text entitled, *13 Weeks to Peace* outlines a process to take one from a place of hurt to a place of healing.³⁵ Week eleven deals with healing past hurts. The subtitle is “It’s not our fault; it is our responsibility.” Schwirzer argues, “We need to walk through the past

³² Renita J. Weems, *Listening for God*, 17.

³³ bell hooks *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 18.

³⁴ bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery*, 19.

³⁵ Jennifer Jill Schwirzer, *13 Weeks to Peace: Allowing Jesus to Heal Your Heart and Mind* (Oshawa, Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press, 2011), 112 – 116.

without wallowing in it. As much as we need insight into how others' actions toward us have affected us, we need even sharper insight into how our own reactions have compounded the damage."³⁶ She infers that our responsibility lies in our reaction to trauma. Dwelling upon what I can change breeds hope and courage; dwelling upon what I cannot change breeds despair, fear, and frustration. I cannot change the past. I cannot ultimately change other people. But, I can, by the grace of God, change myself by making better choices.

I agree with Schwirzer that we need to regain the power lost through being wounded by other people. I also agree with her assessment that this may take some time. I also add that one must be purposeful in that the goal must be kept in sight. The resources I have chosen support the mission of the project to provide ways for women to look internally to evaluate past hurts to healing. The vision is to move toward a life of wholeness and empowerment. I have chosen these resources because they provide clear paths. We cannot stay stuck in the same place and call it progress. We must move forward. Monica Coleman sums it up appropriately,

Postmodern womanist theology emphasizes the ways that we learn from the past in order to live in today's society. Womanist theologies reminds us that black women have histories with experiences of violence and destruction. Womanist theologies discuss the ways that black women find resources for survival and life in their spiritual and cultural pasts. The postmodern theological framework acknowledges that every move into the future entails some loss of what we once were and what we once experienced....we can creatively transform the past to decide how we should move into the future.³⁷

³⁶ Jennifer Jill Schwirzer, *13 Weeks to Peace*, 113.

³⁷ Monica A. Coleman, *Making a Way Out of No Way: A Womanist Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 101.

Nannie Helen Burroughs, a member of my church context, exemplified the attitude and action of one moving forward regardless of the impediments of her time.³⁸ Her work to uplift women created mass opportunities in education and the work world. The societal abuse within the race did not stop her sense of purpose and calling. Burroughs epitomizes the empowerment ethic that Cheryl J. Sanders discusses in, *Empowerment Ethics for a Liberated People*. Sanders describes empowerment ethics as the norms, principles, and ethos ascribed to individuals and groups engaged in the task of liberating others by empowering them to act.³⁹ I think it is monumental to connect liberation and empowerment. In a sense, it speaks to the liberation and empowerment of self in order to benefit and empower others.

Last but not least are the psychological disciplines that bear witness to the project. Humanistic psychology emphasizes the role of the therapist, in this case the facilitator. It suggests that the warmth of the facilitator is important. Creating a warm and sacred space for interaction will be an important aspect of the project. Humans are multi-faceted. We live in a world of facts juxtaposed to a creation of Spirit, by Spirit. Because it is hopeful that the outcomes will be positive, dwelling on the positive instead of the negative in the life of the individual should prove beneficial. Human Psychology also acknowledges the spiritual needs of the psyche. We are spiritual beings living in an earthly body.

³⁸Marcia Y. Riggs, ed. *Can I Get A Witness: Prophetic Religious Voices of African American Women, An Anthology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 86-91.

³⁹ Cheryl J. Sanders, *Empowerment Ethics for a Liberated People* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 4.

The American Psychological Association defines humanistic therapy as an “approach [that] emphasizes people’s capacity to make rational choices and develop to their maximum potential. Concern and respect for others are also important themes. Concern and respect for others build communities.”⁴⁰ I also chose this approach because it is said to be less pathological than some of the others, such as cognitive behavioral psychology. Cognitive and behavioral psychology are important overall because one’s behaviors are examined based on one’s mental processes. Interestingly, within the field of psychology, there are so many sub-disciplines. Many persons who suffer from trauma have not developed pathological disorders, however they are still in need of healing.

Client-Centered Therapy, the approach developed by Carl Rogers, is the practice of Humanistic Psychology theory that encourages a self-awareness and mindfulness that helps the client change their state of mind and behavior from one set of reactions to a healthier one with more productive self-awareness and thoughtful actions. The client-centered designation persisted until the 1970s when he [Rogers] began to use the term person-centered therapy.⁴¹ Dr. David J. Cain continues, person-centered therapy is based on the assumption that all humans have an innate tendency to actualize their potential to grow psychologically and to manage their lives effectively if provided a therapeutic relationship characterized by specific therapist qualities or conditions.⁴² Cain also writes of the importance of the person/ therapist relationship.

⁴⁰ S. A. McLeod, “Person Centered Therapy”. Last modified 2015, accessed September 8, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/client-centred-therapy.html>.

⁴¹ David J. Cain, *Person-Centered Psychotherapies* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010), 1.

⁴² David J. Cain, *Person-Centered Psychotherapies*, 2.

Therapists who practice person-centered therapy are said to believe that if their clients perceive that their therapist, a) understand who they are and how they perceive the world (empathetic understanding), b) accept them without judgement (unconditional positive regard), c) are genuine in the therapeutic relationship (congruence), then constructive therapeutic change is likely to take place.⁴³

While I see attending to the inner thoughts and behaviors as paramount to healing, it is the whole person therapy that Humanistic Psychology addresses, which I find to be in sync with this project.

The world of business provides additional theoretical frameworks. Leadership training facilitators often embrace the metaphor of the “Iceberg” as a teaching tool. The metaphor is that the iceberg floating in the water only reveals a part of itself. Only a small percentage of the iceberg is visible above the surface. Below the surface, out of sight, lurks the rest of the iceberg. Its mass may be twice the size of what can be seen. In the business arena, this teaching tool is used to demonstrate leadership skills, qualities and abilities that lie beneath the surface in an individual. These hidden or undiscovered skills only need the skilled manipulation of mentoring, guiding, and example to be drawn to the surface. It is the diamond in the rough notion. When dealing with personality, identity, behavior, how we show up in the world, what may not be seen, or what lurks beneath the surface may provide determinants. Likewise, in the mind, the subconscious is said to house unseen thoughts and ideas that have not risen to the conscious or mindful level. Human behavior is usually driven by some factor, nature, or nurture. How we act, behave, communicate may be based on deeper unseen contributors. When our hearts are

⁴³ David J. Cain, *Person-Centered Psychotherapies*, 2.

wounded, and the results are intense fear, helplessness, or horror we find ourselves traumatized.

Events, situations over which one has no control, can impact and cause trauma. Dialogue, discourse, and discussion are operative words in the project. Humanistic psychology, as well as theology of healing, focuses on the whole person. Healing emotional hurts that affect how one thinks, how one acts, and one's beliefs is the focus of the project. Inherent in both disciplines is the importance of voice. Story is the vehicle that propels the action. Key words are dialogue, discussion, and discourse.

- Dialogue: a noun, conversation between two or more people, an interchange.
- Discussion: a noun, the action or process of talking about something in order to reach a decision or to exchange ideas.
- Discourse: a noun, verbal interchange of ideas, formal and orderly and usually extended expression of thought on a subject.

My interdisciplinary theory is that women who are experiencing heart wounds may experience healing through looking inward, sharing story, reflection and faith. While an outside catalyst may provide the setting, such as guided group sessions, the answer to what perplexes may be found within each person.

The project will explore the internal emotional status of a group of women through focused discussion sessions. Within this structure, the goals for creating wholeness through pathways of a shared model include: 1) Provide a safe and sacred and confidential space for women to interact; 2) Provide a forum for women to speak openly, to be heard and to listen, and to receive comfort and support; 3) Utilize guided work sessions as pathways to healing, and 4) Utilize mindful interpretation to breakdown

situations and issues. The pursuit of “Mindful Wholeness” will enable the development of an intentional community as a result of shared awareness and spiritual direction.

Ian Barbour’s models for understanding the relationship and interaction between science and religion include the Dialogue Model. This model asserts that both science and religion have a place. I believe that they can work in harmony with each other. God is the creator of all that the mind of man can conceive. Morven R. Baker works with a small circle of women who have been sexually abused as children. Her contribution, “The Effect of Sexual Abuse on a Woman’s View of God”, in the text, *The Long Journey Home* offers insight into the isolation and pain these women felt. She states, “Together in a group they learn that their perceived isolation is in reality a “sisterhood” of sorts, discovering that although their ‘shoes’ were different, they had all walked on the same road of experience.”⁴⁴ It is my belief that the participants in the project will also become a sisterhood; I like to name it a community. Story is important to the group. Baker confides, “Despite being afraid of having their feelings discounted and risking more rejection, the group members begin to share their tragic stories with one another. Eventually they feel safe enough to cry, learning that their tears are not shameful but healing.”⁴⁵ I conclude that the true healing that accompanies a shared path requires some time. Baker’s casework of a Monday evening group of women who were sexually abused as children example supports my summation.

⁴⁴ Morven R. Baker, “The Effect of Sexual Abuse on a Woman’s View of God: The Impact of Incest,” in *The Long Journey Home: Understanding and Ministering to the Sexually Abused*, ed. Andrew J. Schmutzer (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 314.

⁴⁵ Morven Baker, in *The Long Journey Home: Understanding and Ministering to the Sexually Abused*, 314.

By the third week of our support/therapy group experience, this cluster of kindred spirits is beginning to share in an emotional cacophony. For some this small circle provides the first place they no longer feel alone, and they embrace the comfort of being understood as they process their shame”.⁴⁶

How these women see God is important. Hurt persons suffer a duality of feelings about God. Hurt persons are caught between loving God and wondering how God allow bad things to happen to them. Trauma victims may wonder why God allowed them to be hurt, did not protect them. Baker suggests that as a part of the therapy, the client finds positive ways to view God.

As Christians we are taught from Scriptures that we are to slow to anger, even not sin as a result of anger. “Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger” (Ephesians 4:26, NRSV). Yet, anger is a very real emotion that many feel who experience trauma. I add that it need not be coupled with guilt. Anger and guilt needs to be worked through with counseling and therapy, both spiritual and clinical if necessary. Feelings and emotions may be suppressed by victims for various reasons, out of fear, a sense of responsibility, or because of denial. Baker writes that “Survivors of sexual abuse need to be taught that all of their feelings are normal, even anger.”⁴⁷ I agree that some of the problem is our attempting to live out the “perfect Christian life” even when life has not been perfect for us. Naming the issue, emoting about the issue is a part of the healing process that should not be suppressed. Baker restates one of the tenants of humanistic and womanistic psychology. The therapist, the listener, must be in the room with the

⁴⁶ Morven R. Baker, in *The Long Journey Home: Understanding and Ministering to the Sexually Abused*, 314.

⁴⁷ Morven R. Baker, in *The Long Journey Home: Understanding and Ministering to the Sexually Abused*, 322.

client, the participant. Baker states that her heart has been broken as she listens to unbelievable horror stories. A spiritual therapist or counselor may redirect someone's anger at God who is seen as a bystander during the time of trouble. Baker offers that God is a companion in our pain. "Because of his own personal experience of suffering, God asks us to trust him when we are suffering (1 Peter 2:21, NRSV). God never promised that we would not suffer, but he has promised that he will be with us in the midst of our suffering (Psalm 23:4, NRSV).⁴⁸

From the field of medicine, we find the correlation between the spiritual, mental and the physical. Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D. provides enlightening information on how trauma impacts wholly. Capitalizing on the process found in the book, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*, it is argued that trauma happens to all of us and leave traces. Sexual abuse, parental abuse, witnessing domestic violence, psychotic environments, alcoholic or drug addicted parents, neglect, emotional abuse are all traumatic for the recipient or the observer. This author best captures the essence of the condition:

Traumatic experiences do leave traces, whether on a large scale (on our histories and cultures) or close to home, on our families, with dark secrets being imperceptibly passed down through generations. They also leave traces on our minds and emotions, on our capacity for joy and intimacy, and even on our biology and immune systems. Trauma affects not only those who are directly exposed to it, but also those around them. Trauma by definition, is unbearable and intolerable.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Morven R. Baker, in *The Long Journey Home: Understanding and Ministering to the Sexually Abused*, 320 - 321.

⁴⁹ Bessel Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps The Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2014), 205 – 310.

Understanding the effects of trauma is the beginning steps toward healing. Trauma impacts us spiritually, psychologically and physiologically. Understanding how the effects of traumatic stress effects different populations should continue to be explored by both spiritual and clinical counselors. The Paths to Recovery found in *The Body Keeps The Score* is an excellent template to design a process to begin a qualitative study. The Paths include: Healing From Trauma Owning Your Self; Language: Miracle and Tyranny, Letting Go of the Past; Learning to Inhabit Your Body, Putting the Pieces Together: Self-Leadership; Filling in the Holes: Creating Structures; and Finding Your Voice and Choices to Be Made.

The setting for recovery does not have to be a doctor's office. bell hooks' work with women in recovery finds her "couch" on the paper through the pen as well as through person to person interactions. *Sisters of the Yam*, is bell's work about black women and self-recovery. Her work with women and self-recovery begins with honesty.⁵⁰ We learn from hooks that being open and honest, naming the problem and admitting to addictions and abuse are portals to recovery. She provides discourse on what she considers the socialization of an oppressive society as fertile ground for addictions in black people. "Living without the ability to exercise meaningful agency over one's material life is a situation that invites addiction."⁵¹ While a stigma against mental health issues and therapy exists in the black community, the need for this recovery tool clearly exists. Professor hooks asserts,

⁵⁰ bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery* (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2015), 49 – 57.

⁵¹ bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam*, 50.

Unfortunately when addiction is the reason for breaking down or opting out, circumstances do not enable the individual to be engaged in a constructive ‘healthy’ process of recovery. Negative attitudes towards therapy in black life may make it hard for individuals to seek mental health care when they need it and thus heighten the likelihood that they will seek ‘relief’ via substance abuse.⁵²

This project will bridge the disciplines of psychology, theology, and pastoral care. It will incorporate Christian principles and theology as tools for healing and it will examine how psychology, which attends to thoughts and behaviors, also impact behavior, esteem, and wholeness. Talking and sharing will be the primary paths to recovery. For many, sharing will be as painful as the pain of experience. As black people, we have been socialized to not talk about certain things in public, nor in private. We are secret holders. Yet, the story embodies healing. Author of *Talking Back*, bell hooks expounds on this premise, “We, black people, must speak about much that is private that must be shared, if we are to heal our wounds (hurts caused by domination and exploitation and oppression), if we are to recover and realize ourselves.”⁵³ “Talking” will be verbal and narrative. Participants will be encouraged to write their stories as well as talk about them. Mindful writing will be maintained through journals. Mark Matousek, calls it writing to awaken, a journey of self-awareness deepened by the exploration of the stories you tell yourself and the masks you wear in the world.⁵⁴ For Matousek, telling the truth is a radical act that transforms.

Telling the truth awakens us automatically. When we write down our story, we become the witness, and this objective distance brings an “aha” as the character

⁵² bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam*, 54.

⁵³ bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1989), 3.

⁵⁴ Mark Matousek, *Writing to Awaken: A Journey of Truth, Transformation & Self-Discovery* (Oakland, CA: Reveal Press, 2017), 2

we believed to be solid reveals itself as a narrative construct. When you tell the truth, your story changes, when your story changes, your life is transformed.⁵⁵

Conclusion

In conclusion, this work seeks to fill in the holes and to build structure. Its goal is not to provide a method of problem solving, but to provide insight into one's experiences that produce positive change, thoughtful repose, healed memories, and a more solid foundation. Holes need to be identified with the help of spiritual, psychological and womanist foci. Womanist voices urge us to reflect and remember how we have survived. How community and family, the church, all play significant roles in helping us to overcome. In reality bell hooks reminds us that we have the knowledge:

Not all black people hate ourselves or our blackness. We come from a long line of ancestors who knew how to heal the wounded black psyche when it was assaulted by oppressive beliefs. Those powerful survival strategies have been handed down from generation to generation. They exist. And though working public knowledge of them has been suppressed, we can bring this old knowledge out of dusty attics, closets of the mind where we have learned to hide our ghosts away, and relearn useful habits of thinking and being.⁵⁶

The interdisciplinary theories and practices reviewed and presented in this chapter provide valid worldviews to be considered. These 'voices' add depth and dimension to the project. This study seeks to dust off the cobwebs of hidden hurts. We will look at, think about, reflect upon, talk about, reframe and move beyond the hurts. We will move beyond the broken pieces and soul scars produced by hurt. If healing is to occur we must be willing to seek liberation, be honest, and open up.

⁵⁵ Mark Matousek, *Writing to Awaken*, 2.

⁵⁶ bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam*, 61.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

Women of the church have always strived to be tools for the betterment of others, and instruments of God's in the building up of the Kingdom here on earth. They serve as clergy, missionaries, teachers, evangelists, and lay leaders. Sometimes this drive to benefit others causes one to lose focus on self. The project, *Broken Pieces and Soul Scars in Women: Pathways to a Shared Journey of Healing* places the focus on the self. The inner self is examined in order to determine how our outer selves are influenced. These influences produce behavior, personalities, and actions. Positive changes project outwardly. Healing inner wounds not only benefit the individual, but the community as well. It is in this environment with this rich history that we seek to continue the uplift of the lives of the membership and the wider community. It is important to state that the women have been engaging in many ways to enhance spiritual formation.

The purpose of the current study is to provide women with an organized and strategic learning environment to examine inner selves, to reflect on those heart places that are bound with hurts and to begin to heal those hurts. It is hoped that inner peace and tranquility will result as old wounds are healed. Peace of mind, peace in heart, and peace

in the body are ultimate rewards of healing. In the text, *Blessed Are The Peacemakers*, C.

Anthony Hunt, provides a complexed and in-depth review of peace and its meaning.

The request for peace, for a return to the uninjured wholeness of creation, is one of the deepest longings of humanity. It is a search for the essence and synthesis of human life, the harmony of all of life's energies, and is based on the fundamental recognition that the divine intention is true; the world is indeed intended to be very good.¹

Hunt's conceptions are biblical and theological and are related to peace for all mankind.

However, relating his concept to the individual warring that occurs in our brokenness, I submit that the result of the wholeness that restores us to the uninjured state is peace.

Hunt sums up the desired need for peace. He continues,

The ultimate objective of making peace is the social transformation of persons and institutions therefore it is not sufficient to simply maintain the present condition, plight or status quo. The objective is to effect positive and progressive change, to help persons experience life-transforming, and all-enveloping presence and love of God which will empower them to stretch beyond the comfort zones of human circumstances. The search is for a creative catalyst that will energize humanity's quest to transform and be transformed. As peace is discovered, live and relationships are eventually changed to reflect the reality of shalom – the wholeness, well-being, and salvation that is essential to authentic community.²

In order to relate peace on the micro level from a world view to an individual occurrence,

I substitute the individual for humankind and the mind, body, and spirit for the world.

Wherein Dr. Hunt's world view for peace is on the macro level, I would like to relate his concepts to the individual.

This dissertation journey began with the need to develop a doctoral project. Some come to the starting gate with a specific need or problem in mind, others such as myself

¹ C. Anthony Hunt, *Blessed Are The Peacemakers: A Theological Analysis Of The Thought of Howard Thurman And Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Lima, OH: Wyndham Hall Press, 2005), 24.

² Hunt, *Blessed Are The Peacemakers*, 54.

who see many needs must settle on one for the sake of implementation. Each semester served as a layer upon which to build a solid foundation. Memory was stimulated, and my life journey and relationship with God was reviewed. Throughout the process I became aware of how God has manifested himself in my life, through experiences, learnings, and through an active desire to know Him and His will for my life. Stimuli of focus for me has always been on the will of God for humanity. How God wants us whole, well, and prosperous. God wants us to be in peace with one another. Yet, humankind's own willfulness, own stubbornness, own disobedience, has precipitated vast and different outcomes than what God wants for us. Outcomes such as pain, instead of joy; worry instead of confidence; disease instead of good health; hate in place of love; lack in place of abundance; greed instead of generosity; disbelief instead of belief and faith; evil instead of good; incivility instead of civility; oppression in place freedom; abuse instead of caring; of brokenness in place of wholeness; and death in place of life. Because of these mutant behaviors, which affect our relationships with God, with self and with each other, we must embark on ways to circumvent, ways to raise our critical consciousness, and ways to recover our brokenness.

Insidious scars left on the black community's psychological psyche resulting from slavery are many and remain as cancerous cells in the body. We continue to need recovery to tear down barriers in the mind, heart and soul that impact our very being. First, we must understand that there is nothing wrong in admitting that there is a problem, an issue, or for some an unresolved something. Secondly, we need to understand that seeking help is the second step to recovery. Everybody is recovering from something,

according to William D. Watley, *Everybody is Recovering From Something: Biblical Strategies for Overcoming Life's Setbacks*. Watley asserts,

One of the cardinal rules of being human is nobody, absolutely nobody, goes through life without something in their past or present that either accompanies them like a shadow that waits for the right conditions to manifest itself, or haunts them like a ghost and can impact their personality, character, perception of others and vision of life----for better or for worse. Recovery is not a sickness or a weakness, a sin or a failure, a neurosis or a psychosis, a malady or a generational curse. Recovery is the path to a wholesome and fulfilling life. The necessity for recovery is a fact of life. Recovery then is life itself.³

Third, as Christians we should rely on all resources available to us: The Scriptures, The Preached Word, Prayer, and Meditation. We cannot overlook the importance of intimate groups or therapy. Recovery is a personal thing. One must desire healing to be made whole.

This project is another foray in the arena of recovery. Against the backdrop of my personal experience and ministry experience, the impetus for the project was birthed. In this final chapter the seven pathways in the Mindful Transformation project that served as the creative catalyst to effect positive change will be reviewed. I also provide suggestions for seven specific attitudes that promote healing. Attitude determine outcomes and results for participants. One's attitudes is relevant to results. It is worthy to note that several attitudes were discerned among the participants.

³ William D. Watley, *Everybody is Recovering From Something: Biblical Strategies for Overcoming Life's Setbacks* (Printed in the United States: New Seasons Press, 2016), Introduction.

Methodology

The approach taken to gather data for the project is a qualitative research method.

According to John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell's, *Research Design, Fifth Edition*,

Qualitative research is an approach for exploring, and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of reporting the complexity of a situation.⁴

According to John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, "In a qualitative project, the author will describe a research problem that can best be understood by *exploring* a concept or phenomenon. We have suggested that researchers use it to probe a topic when the variables and theory base are unknown."⁵ Phenomenology explores the lived experiences of individuals and groups, and can provide a means to uncover deep understanding of these experiences from the perspective of the individual or the group. For example, a question to explore would be how the early years of one's life has impacted one's concept of self-esteem. Subjectivity is expected in qualitative research as hard responses to questions cannot be determined because of the multiple realities of each individual. The qualitative method is seen as the best way to approach this project because details of the feelings, thoughts and emotions come into play, which are not

⁴ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2018), 4.

⁵ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 104.

present in the quantitative method. The overall concern of this study involves engaging approaches to bring about internal investigations that will result in some enlightenment.

The approach taken to gather data for the project comes from the use of focus group meetings, work sessions, surveys, questionnaires, group activities, telephone interviews and evaluations. A phenomenological road map which involves the study of several individuals who have shared experiences was considered. It is safe to say that many of us have suffered some of the same trauma, especially as women and particularly as African American women. The reason for choosing these approaches are found in the qualitative research method. These varied approaches were used to provide participants with several paths to provide information. I distributed a seeking flyer inviting participants to join the journey through broken pieces and soul scars to mindful transformation (see Appendix A). I held pre-project communications sessions with persons who expressed an interest in participating in the project because of the flyer. As stated throughout this dissertation, the impetus for the study began with a seminary assignment and subsequent reflection. Several women or men related ministries will occur because of this project.

The study consisted of six (6) work sessions, 1.5 hours each. The first session included an overview and introduction. Questionnaires were distributed at the opening and closing of each session. Handouts included poems, prayers, and pictures were provided at each session. The sixth session involved a closing ceremony. After much prayer, it was revealed that I should pray for each person prior to the beginning of the study. I also was reminded by the Spirit to offer suggestions to them that would assist them in reaping the maximum benefit from the sessions. As a result, the six engagement

attitudes model was created. The participants were advised to enter the study with attitudes or a frame of mind that would precipitate healing. These attitudes are needed to engage the material and to bring about active involvement.

Six Engagement Attitudes:

1. Have an attitude of being open to the spirit of the project of sharing and receiving.
2. Have an attitude of reflecting, allowing memories to surface.
3. Have a self-examining attitude, searching motives and intentions.
4. Have a listening attitude, hearing beyond the words, allowing the word to speak to the heart.
5. Have a confessing attitude of truthfulness and honesty.
6. Have a connecting attitude of being united with the other.

Having these attitudes will enable participants to get the most out of the shared healing journey experience. This important frame of minds serve as navigators during the pathways discussions and activities.

Pathways in the Mindful Transformation Project are:

1. Mindful Spiritual Reframing – Spiritual reframing allows one to revisit her spirituality, beliefs and in light of life's experiences.
2. Mindful Godly Image – Focuses on the image of God, Imago Dei, and the relationship to one's own image of self.
3. Mindful Self-Love – Explores one's true feelings about self. Love, its meanings sacredly and secularly will be discussed. Behaviors of love will be examined.
4. Mindful Forgiveness – Forgiveness from a biblical and psychological viewpoint will be studied. A deep dive into the characteristics of forgiveness

will be covered. Why forgiveness is essential to well-being and how unforgiveness in one's heart keeps one bound are topics that will be discussed.

5. Mindful Storytelling – The sharing of story has been proven scientifically and biblically to be important to the healing process. Participants will be encouraged to share their stories. Story also indicates one's self-identity.
6. Mindful Purpose – Mindful intentionality will be discussed. The establishment of beloved community is expected as a result of going on this journey together. Wholeness is the purpose, and will be examined in depth. What does wholeness mean, and how does my wholeness affect the community are questions that will be asked.

Implementation

Phase one of the project implementation focused on communications. A conversation was held with the Senior Pastor of the church. I explained the project and its purpose and meaning for the church. He agreed that the project was sound and that the church could be used as the safe and sacred space for the study. A meeting was held with my professional associates to present the project and to get feedback. Each of these held doctoral degrees and one is also an ordained minister. They provided sound scientific information on design and implementation. To seek participants, I designed a communications flyer.

In January 2019, I began communication with context advisors to determine a strategy for getting the flyer out to the widest audience, and to get feedback on design. The flyer was finalized and distributed. It was sent to leaders in area churches. It had been determined that participants could be inside or outside of the context. During a mass meeting of the Women's Ministry, I introduced the study and provided copies of the flyer

and provided answers to questions. The flyer was disseminated to several other churches in the area.

The project study consisted of six work sessions I designed based on information gleaned from scripture and resources on trauma and brokenness; and on healing for women as previously mentioned in this document. The sessions were held from June 10 – July 15, from 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. on each Monday night. Ten sessions were planned initially, but was changed to six due to time restraints, and participant commitment. This change was discussed with my mentor as well as the Pastor of the Church. Space at the church was designated in an upper room away from other public space. Fortunately, the church has very few meetings scheduled on Monday nights; and except for a couple of trustees, we had the church to ourselves.

The setting of the room was instrumental in making the environment open and peaceful. The “circle” included chairs around tables set in a “U” shape. No one’s back was to another. I (facilitator) stood in the opening of the “U” shape. Each session began with a “welcome call to the space”, for centering, and a quiet moment of reflection where participants are urged to relax, focus, and let go of the day’s events. This was followed by an opening prayer, scripture, poem or reading. The foundation scripture from Luke 13:10-17 was read for reflection. Participants were asked to share any thoughts they had during the week from their journal or experiences. An agenda package was prepared for each week featuring pathways to a roadmap of healing.

Session one was an orientation session. Participants received an overview of the project. Goals and expectations of the project were communicated. I provided an overview of my dissertation journey, and its requirements, which had thus culminated in

the design and subsequent implementation of the project. The hypothesis and thesis was shared. I shared that the learning environment was a cohort of persons who served as peers throughout the process. They were informed that the Social Justice track, which focused on Enacting Dr. Martin Luther King's Beloved Community, guided the project. Each participants received a welcome/orientation packet. The welcome/orientation packet included a welcome letter, statement of intent, confidentiality statement, attendance statement, and a letter about participating as a human subject (see Appendix B). A pre-survey was also distributed (see Appendix C). A self-assessment questionnaire was distributed (see Appendix D).

Dr. Martin Luther King's concept of a Beloved Community as described by Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp Jr, in the text *Search for the Beloved Community: The Thinking of Martin Luther King Jr.* was presented to the group.⁶ They write, "King's conception of the Beloved Community is best described as a transformed and regenerated human society."⁷ The Foundational Scripture, Luke 13:10 - 17 was read and enhanced by the introduction of a picture of a bent over women (crippled woman) as depicted from *Woman Word: A Feminist Lectionary and Psalter, Women of the New Testament* by Miriam Therese Winter (see Appendix E). I chose this particular picture from all that I reviewed because not only was she bent over at a forty-five angle, but her features were heavily ethnic, and face bore the emotions of pain, agony, hurt, weariness and frustration. Each participant received a copy of the picture and a journal. A list of additional

⁶ Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp, Jr., *Search For The Beloved Community: The Thinking of Martin Luther King Jr.* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1998), 130-136.

⁷ Smith and Zepp, Jr. *Search for The Beloved Community*, 130.

journaling suggestions were provide for the participants (see Appendix F). I led the group in a writing activity. *Study action*: The women were asked to define the woman's life, both outwardly and inwardly, journal their thoughts and then enter into discussion. *Healing Principle*: "Brotherhood [sisterhood] is a reality in King's conception of the Beloved Community."⁸ In laymen's terms it means a community where we are interrelated and integrated. This principle urges us to lean and depend and support one another and to understand that what affects me also affects the other. After much discussion, the session was closed with prayer. Evaluations were distributed and collected.

Session Two's content included the pathways of mindfulness, the Imago Dei, and Self-Image. The purpose of session two was to explore how mindfulness, the practice of being present is important to our well-being. Mindfulness prompts us to know that God is present here and now in spite of what we have been or are going through. Additional topics included secrets, shame, and the Imago Dei. We discussed the issue of the secrets we hold and they keep us bound and fearful. Each participant admitted to having secrets, defined as those things that only God and I know about me. Several held steadfast that they would not share them with anyone at this point. I pointed out the connection between secrets and shame. A facet of woundedness, shame is a grave contributor to emotional pain. Women are often weighted down under a barrage of onslaughts that destroy or devalue their self-worth. The Imago Dei, being made in the image of God, combats the negative thoughts we may have of ourselves. We discussed the meaning, and

⁸ Smith and Zepp, Jr., *Search for The Beloved Community*. 130.

it's relativity to each individual. We also considered how our own fractured self-image compares to God's image of us.

We discussed the deep dive into shame, an unpleasant self-conscious emotion typically associated with a negative evaluation of the self, withdrawal motivations, and feelings of distress, exposure, mistrust, powerlessness, and worthlessness. References to shame are from the book, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves* by Curt Thompson, MD, and from *Shame: Theory, Therapy, Theology* by Stephen Patterson. We confronted how shame impacts these particular pathways. The activity in session two involved reflecting on what one sees when looking in a mirror. Participants were asked to journal reflections. Discussions followed the exercise.

Excerpts from Barbara L. Roose's *Beautiful Already* urge us to reclaim God's perspective on beauty were read. We spent some time Scripture found in the Song of Solomon, 4:7.

"You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you" (NRSV). The recommended resource was *The Princess Within* by Serita Ann Jakes. The book is about restoring the soul of a woman and touches on shame and guilt and the need for honesty. Healing Principle: While there may be flaws, I am wonderfully and fearfully made in God's sight. In God, I am good. Closing thoughts were invited and closing prayer. The questionnaire, "I See Myself As" was distributed and collected (see Appendix G).

Session Three's content centered on trauma, forgiveness and storytelling. After the opening, we began with a recap on shame as a behavior modifier. The healing principle is not to let shame continue to imprison and bound. The focus was on calling out shame for what it is and understanding how it has impacted our lives and to reverse or reframe its hold over us. It was noted that not being honest with one's self may

perpetuate lies. Interestingly, I told the group that the lie may have come from the outside, but very well could have come from within from the inside. This led to a discussion. *Healing principle:* We will not let shame continue to imprison and bound.

Trauma was the next stepping stone that was raised. Key issues that pertain to trauma were shared. What is trauma? How does trauma help to shape who we are? How long do we have to deal with the residual effects of trauma? We talked about different kinds of trauma, such as trauma suffered in childhood, environmental trauma, verbal and emotional abuse, oppression and racism. Black women carry an enormous amount of trauma in their bodies. *Black Women Own the Conversation*, a television show presented on the OWN network addresses issues that black women face. Topics on the show include issues of mind, body, soul, motherhood, relationships, mental health and therapy. The one hour show featured the voices of one hundred black women in a “speak easy” environment on various subjects that impact them. The session on therapy and mental health put an audible lens on the issues that the women face; such as depression, trauma resulting from the death of children, death of parents, racism on the job, and the myth of black women being “strong.” We also talked about the stigma of mental illness and myths regarding therapy in the black community. How the black community views mental illness as something that should be dealt with in the “family”; something we do not talk about outside of the family. *Healing principle:* There are ways to treat the residual effects of trauma in our lives. There are ways to treat the residual effects of trauma in our lives. The effects of trauma may be treated through therapy. Christian psychotherapy, Humanistic psychotherapy, Womanist therapy, and pastoral care are avenues for treatment.

The pathway of storytelling and its importance to our healing was explained during this session. We recalled the childhood stories and how they typically ended. They usually began with, “Once upon a time”; and ended with “Happily Ever After.” Childhood stories usually had a moral lesson embedded in them. We discussed the definition of the word, moral. Storytelling as a healing principle promises that as we share our stories, not only do they bring us closer, we began to understand that our differences are similar. This evokes the “I am not alone” notion. Stories provide us with ways of knowing ourselves and of sharing ourselves with the other. Richard Stone, author of *The Healing Art of Storytelling*, asserts “each time we journey inward and trace the path of a memory to it we seem to discover nuances and connections that previously went unnoticed.”⁹ It is hopeful that as they listen to their story, the ground will shift, and new insights will be revealed.

The healing principle of storytelling is gleaned in part from the words of Barbara Miller Fishman PhD, in the text, *Emotional Healing through Mindful Meditation: Stories and Meditations for Women Seeking Wholeness*.¹⁰ Her book shares the stories of eight women who came together seeking wholeness. The vehicle was storytelling. Each woman’s story is a chapter in the book. Text from Sarah Heath’s *What’s Your Story? Seeing Your Life Through God’s Eyes* was introduced as a discussion topic. Heath reminds us “Whether we want to share them or not, our unique stories have the potential

⁹ Richard Stone, *The Healing Art of Storytelling: A Sacred Journey of Personal Discovery* (New York, NY: Authors Choice Press, 2004), 20.

¹⁰ Barbara Miller Fishman, PhD, *Emotional Healing through Mindful Meditation: Stories and Meditations for Women Seeking Wholeness* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2002), 2.

to free us and others around us.”¹¹ Heath reminds readers of the side effects of holding onto story utilizing a quote from Zora Neal Hurston in her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on A Road*, 176. “There is no agony like bearing an untold story inside you.”¹² *Healing Principle*: As I hear my story, I will begin to see patterns and habitual behaviors shaped me and make choices to move forward to my wholeness.

Forgiveness was also introduced as a pathway to healing during session three. A dictionary definition was supplied, according to Merriam Webster forgiveness is “To pardon or absolve, to stop being angry about or resentful against.”¹³ Forgiveness is different from condoning, excusing, forgetting, pardoning, and reconciliation. The Biblical reference to forgiveness is shared from *The Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. It reads, “The act of excusing or pardoning others in spite of their slights, shortcomings, and errors. As a theological term, forgiveness refers to God’s pardon of the sins of human beings”¹⁴.

Several principles of forgiveness were shared and discussed. From James McCarroll, “The lesson on real forgiveness happened in spaces where the decision to forgive was seemingly impossible. We learn forgiveness when our hearts are still racing any time, we recall the offences committed against us.”¹⁵ John Bevere assertion on forgiveness is, “The way we

¹¹ Sarah Heath, *What’s Your Story: Seeing Your Life Through God’s Eyes* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2017), 12.

¹² Sarah Heath, *What’s Your Story*, 12.

¹³ Merriam Webster, *Webster’s II Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005), 282.

¹⁴ Ronald F. Youngblood, ed., *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary: New and Enhanced Edition* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2014), 414-415.

¹⁵ James McCarroll, *The Faith to Forgive: A New Path to Forgiveness As A Journey of Faith* (Murfreesboro, TN: Holy Impact Publishing, 2019),

forgive, release, and restore another person is the way we will be forgiven.”¹⁶ Jennifer Jill Schwirzer explains, “Forgiveness is to cover; to send away; and to grace. Forgiveness of others becomes possible when we realize God’s forgiveness of us.”¹⁷

Several biblical references about forgiveness were read and discussed. “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt 6:14-15, NRSV). The writer of the Gospel of Mark offers, “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses” (Mk 11:25, NRSV). Resources used for forgiveness, are *The Bible, The Face of Forgiveness: A Pastoral Theology of Shame and Redemption, Radical Forgiveness, and Forgive for Good*. We had a lively discussion on forgiveness and offenses. The text, *The Bait of Satan: Living Free from the Deadly Trap of Offense*, was used as a resource on the discussion of offenses. We discussed the amount of mind space is taking up because of offenses. The challenge is to think of the mind as available physical space. The question was posed regarding how much of our mind space we want to allow for bitterness. *Healing Principle: Forgiveness is a process*. Letting go of the bitterness of an offense perceived or actual frees us. Martin Luther King states, “Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude.”¹⁸ Also, forgiveness is

¹⁶ James Bevere, *The Bait of Satan: Living Free From the Deadly Trap of Offense*, 20th Anniversary Ed. (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2014), 137.

¹⁷ Jennifer Jill Schwirzer, *13 Weeks to Peace: Allowing Jesus to Heal Your Heart and Mind* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2011), 53-55.

¹⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 33.

never earned, it is grace. A questionnaire was distributed to be turned at the next session. The session end with prayer.

The pathways discussed in session four were love (including self-love, and listening as an act of love), self-esteem and storytelling. On the notion of love, we find a reference by Jesus in the Gospels of Matt. 22:34 – 44; Mark 12:28 – 36: and Luke 10:25 – 43. The response is to a question: Which is the greatest commandment? Jesus responds in Mark specifically, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord in one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.’ This session focused on Jesus’ commandment to love neighbor as self; and serves as the impetus to discuss self-love. The premise being that if one does not love self, how then one can love another. Probing questions were asked to stimulate thought and discussion: What is love? What do you believe about love? About love of God? About love of self? And about the love of other? We focused on the different meanings of love and synonyms of love.

We discussed love as it relates to the Christian faith, and Dr. Martin Luther King’s sense of loving neighbor as found in the text, *Strength to Love*. We also had a discussion on what it means to love one’s enemies and relied on Dr. King’s concept of love. We discussed Dr. King’s three points listed here abbreviated, 1) we must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. 2) we must recognize that the evil deed of the enemy-neighbor, the thing that hurts, never quite expresses all that he [she] is, and 3) we must not seek to defeat or humiliate the enemy, but to win his friendship and understanding. There was much discussion concerning these points, some positive, some

in disagreement and some in-between accepting and not accepting. I shared Dr. King's statement on the meaning of love, and love vs like.

The meaning of love is not to be confused with some sentimental outpouring. Love is something much deeper than emotional bosh. He also differentiated between love and like. He said that it is almost impossible to like some people. "Like is a sentimental and affectionate word. How can one be very affectionate toward a person who avowed aim to crush our very being and place innumerable stumbling blocks in our path?"¹⁹

I shared this to emphasize the difference between the emotions; and offered that Dr. King's rationale on love was that it was on a much higher plane. The agape (creative good will for all, an overflowing love that seeks nothing in return, the love of God operating in the human heart) is what Jesus bids us to as Dr. King stated. With the notion of agape as our guide, we then turned our focus to practicing love. *Healing Principle:* Love, real love is more than a feeling, more than liking something or someone, real love, is the love of God in our hearts extended inward and outward.

Practicing love, even self-love begins understanding what love is. Many of us have a twisted or dysfunctional idea of love due to many factors. Author, bell hooks writes,

When we see love as a combination of trust, commitment, care, respect, knowledge, and responsibility, we can work on developing these qualities or, if they are already a part of who we are, we can learn to extend them to ourselves. When we use a working definition of love that tells us it is the action we take on behalf of our own or another's spiritual growth, it provides us with a beginning blueprint for working on the issue of self-love.²⁰

¹⁹ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love*, 46.

²⁰ bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2001), 54.

We segued into going over self-love. One of the concepts that support a positive or negative self-love is self-esteem. I pointed out that self-esteem was not self-confidence.

Self-confidence is about trusting yourself and your abilities in certain areas or not.

Healing Principle: Self-Love is a fluid occupation. One must work continuously to embrace oneself in spite of negative influences.

Self-esteem, however, is about how one sees oneself. It is about our perception of worth. The question is how do you treat yourself? Do you treat yourself with love, care, and respect or not? Do you consider your body the temple of Christ or not? According to Megan MacCutcheon, author of *The Self-Esteem Workbook for Women*, “the roots of self-esteem are established early in life; however, our self-esteem is not necessarily consistent over time. Both internal and external factors affect and shape our self-esteem”²¹. She offers five steps to a healthy self-esteem. These were shared with the team. Step 1) Know Yourself, 2) Care for Yourself, 3) Respect Yourself, 4) Accept Yourself, and 5) Love Yourself.

Under knowing yourself, we talked about self favorites (color, food, place, desired job etc.). Under caring for yourself, we discussed reframing negative self-talk, ways to physically care for self, such as diet, exercise, mental ways of care, meditation, prayer, enough sleep, and learning how to say no, for example. Under respecting yourself, we discussed the decisions and choices we make and the outcomes whether they are what we want or not, and how to respect ourselves enough not to think that all we deserve are bad things in our lives. Under accepting yourself, we talked about how

²¹ Megan MacCutcheon, *The Self-Esteem Workbook for Women* (Emeryville, CA: Althea Press, 2018), 1.

important it is to truly accept ourselves. Several of them did not accept themselves. We then talked about what was about them that they did not accept, and if it was something in their power to change. Here I invoked the Serenity Prayer. The reflection question became what is preventing you from changing the things about yourself that you can change? *Healing Principle: Self-Esteem, to know yourself, care for yourself, respect yourself, accept yourself and love yourself.*

Each participant was then asked to tell her story. Each was asked the question, “Who are you? They were asked to supply specific information regarding certain criteria. Each was to tell where she was raised; where she fell in the birth order; was she spoiled, what was it like for her in grade school, middle school and high school; was she a good student; and what was her life like as a child? This proved to be one of the most powerful actions during the project. Each shared her story revealing much that many of the others did not know. This activity released the hold on the group, intimacy and bonding was palpable in the room. I reminded the group that even Jesus’ stories, called parables, had meaning. They became revelations that pushed the listeners to examine themselves and their understanding of God. Sometimes in our stories we find revelation. We closed in prayer. Resources for session four: *Biblical Scriptures, All About Love: New Visions, Listening Is An Act of Love, Strength to Love, Living Love: Finding True Joy, Freedom and Peace, Self-Esteem, 4th Edition, The Self-Esteem Workbook for Women, Healing Invisible Wounds.*

Pathways for session five were healing, purpose, and self-compassion. Supporting topics included healing memories, offense, and pride. We began with having persons who missed session four tell their stories. It was still impactful as it had been at the previous

session. I restated the importance of storytelling as a vital pathway on our journey. I shared that this is traced to what Richard F. Mollica, MD refers to as a “biological miracle.”²² The following quote was read.

The foundation of storytelling is the capacity of human beings to empathically listen to the suffering of others, as an act that is therapeutic for the storyteller and beneficial to the listener. Not only can storytelling establish a human connection with others, abolishing the isolation caused by violence, it can also enhance the biological extinction of traumatic memories and hasten the psychological recovery of a traumatized person. These positive outcomes emerge from the biological miracle of empathy²³.

I then began to lead the group through various concepts of healing. I began with the biblical reports of Jesus’ healings. These were physical healings of body, mind, and spirit. The bible tells of Jesus curing a variety of problems, including blindness, paralysis, leprosy, severed ears, withered arms, stopping the flow of blood, and physical deformity. The healing acts that Jesus performed were considered miracles; that is something that happens outside of the normal.

Webster’s definition of a miracle is clear and concise, “An event or effect in the physical world deviating from the known laws of nature; an extra-ordinary, anomalous, or abnormal event brought about by super-human agency.”²⁴ Additional definitions of healing were offered. True Henderson defined healing as “the remembrance of our true spiritual selfhood as the very essence of love – to simply remember what is already true – our present perfection”²⁵. We again reviewed the story of the bent over women. Healing

²² Richard F. Mollica, MD, *Healing Invisible Wounds: Paths to Hope and Recovery in a Violent World* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016), 115.

²³ Richard F. Mollica, MD, *Healing Invisible Wounds*, 115.

²⁴ Webster’s II Dictionary 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005), 455

²⁵ True Henderson, *Living Love* (Carmel, IN: Hawthorne Publishing, 2004), 9.

and prayer are intertwined for Andrew Park, theologian and author. “Healing is an ongoing process, transpiring gradually under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Prayer is a vital instrument in healing *han* (wounds). Since prayer is foundational in Christian life, I will not treat it separately in our discussion of healing.”²⁶ Parks see prayer as an integral part of the healing process.

For the sake of the group, transformative healing was explored. Transformative healing changes from the inside out and from the outside in. The Apostle Paul talks about being transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2). I agree with Park that healing is wholeness. It is a transformative healing. It is the aim of the project that transformation will occur for all who participate. We explored how memories painful or not affect the present; and about how some things we choose to forget and others that reverberate over and over again. Journal assignment: Share with Christ a painful memory that keeps you from getting healed. Let’s look at how Jesus healed the painful memories of the disciples at Emmaus (Luke 23:13-35). The purpose was addressed from the standpoint of positive intention. We then did another review of the Bent Over Woman’s life and considered what her life may have been like after her healing. We began with talking about how she felt being able to stand up and look directly into Jesus’ face.

Healing Principle: You must first acknowledge that you are wounded and then to desire healing. It is a process, healing is transformative. Resources for session five, *Be Unapologetically You: A Guide for Women of Color, Heal, Grow, Serve, Living Love, From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded, Healing of Memories: Prayer and*

²⁶ Sung Park, *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 131.

Confession Steps to Inner Healing, The Bait of Satan, Forgive for Good, The Art of Healing Prayer.

Session six included closing activities in addition to the exploration of pathways, Christian Mindfulness, Self-Compassion, Wholeness and Community. I began with a review of the soul work journey we had begun five weeks earlier by briefly naming all of the topics we had been introduced to or reintroduced to and discussed. I shared the objectives for session six and provided a recap on forgiveness which brought us to the subject of mindfulness. We had discussed mindfulness during an earlier session, however, this discussion pertained especially to Christian Mindfulness as related in Amy Oden's text, *Right Here, Right Now*. We used mindfulness in relationship to painful experiences. Oden differentiates between meditational mindfulness and Christian mindfulness. "Christian mindfulness is the practice of paying prayerful attention in the present moment to God's abundant life." Expounding on paying attention, she writes, "Paying attention means the act of using our awareness on purpose."²⁷ Several ways to practice Christian mindfulness were examined. We discussed practicing the presence of God individually (in everyday routines, seek and claim God's life with us, right her, right now). We talked about how a mindful practice of us all is not just about ourselves. The point was raised that mindfulness in social action allows us to collectively practice God's mission Dei; allowing us to participate in what God is doing in the world. Collectively or communally, we discussed mindful social action. Oden states that "the purpose of

²⁷ Amy G. Oden, *Right Here Right Now: The Practice of Christian Mindfulness* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2017), 2-3.

mindfulness in social action is to stay rooted in the mission Dei so that we practice what God is doing in the world”²⁸.

I introduced the concept of Self-Compassion. Kristin Neff, PhD discusses the importance of learning to be kind to yourself, in the book by the same name. Neff talks about self-critical thoughts that take the form of inner dialogue, a constant commentary and evaluation of what we are experiencing. We discussed the three points that help our emotions when we practice self-compassion. According to Neff, whenever we notice we are in pain, we have three potential courses of action. They are “1) give ourselves kindness and care, 2) remind ourselves that encouraging pain is part of the shared human experience, and 3) we can hold our thoughts and emotions in mindful awareness”²⁹. We also touched on Beverly Engel’s five aspects of self-compassion taken from the text, *It Wasn’t Your Fault*. Her aspects include, self-understanding, self-forgiveness, self-acceptance, self-kindness, and self-encouragement. Handouts included quotes from this text. The pathways wholeness and community were covered during this session. We again reviewed healing to bring us to what wholeness looked like.

Wholeness is self-appreciation. Margaret Kornfeld’s conception of wholeness is our guiding principle. Kornfeld is a proponent of solution based therapy for healing and wholeness, which focuses on the solution instead of the problem. She suggests wholeness must be cultivated.³⁰ Wholeness is also cultivated through community. “Faith

²⁸ Amy Oden, *Right Here Right Now: The Practice of Christian Mindfulness*, 76.

²⁹ Kristen Neff, PhD, *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind To Yourself* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2011), 102-103.

³⁰ Margaret Kornfeld, *Cultivating Wholeness: A Guide to Care and Counseling in Faith Communities* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2009), 114-144.

communities are being challenged to become must become authentic places where members can experience their wholeness. Because religious communities and their members are functioning in the natural transitions of life, they can use their experiences for healing past wounds as well as for supporting growth.” I share that it is important that participants begin to see themselves as whole and not fractured even in the midst of pain. It is reinforced that obtaining wholeness is a journey. The important thing about a journey is to begin. Each step leads to the destination; that is if we want to get somewhere, and if we desire not to remain stuck. We began a discussion on community.

Community is another vital pathway to healing. Ultimately, community will be created from the journey through the Broken Pieces and Soul Scars project. I see this community as a community of care. Why is community significant and essential to growth? Kornfeld analyzes,

All communities, whether religious or public, have a spiritual basis. Communities have a spiritual center; they are lived out in human fashion. For communities to function – to hold and support – they must be places where their members are able to: communicate with each other honestly and without fear, resolve conflicts with each other individually and within the group, learn to love themselves so they can love each other and reach out to strangers. Such communities are safe, inclusive, and just.³¹

For Dr. King, nonviolence is the means to achieve the Beloved Community³². I offered to the group that being bound by soul wounds is violent. In order to establish community within, in mind, body, and soul, the violence of living with offenses, bitterness, bad memories and unforgiveness must be overcome and nonviolence, i.e. healing must be sought at all cost. In community, we can heal as black women through our lived

³¹ Margaret Kornfeld, *Cultivating Wholeness*, 19.

³² Smith and Zepp, Jr., *Search For The Beloved Community*, 145.

experience of community and communion. Writer bell hooks surmises that our collective healing as a people must be a collective process. She continues, that “our collective hope is that black women would find a space where they could name their pain and find ways to heal.”³³ This discussion on community as a pathway to healing is discussed with the group. Participants’ comments were positive that a community had been created as a result of the shared journey.

We closed this session with a “Remembering Your Baptism” activity. Participants verbally accepted their healing in the name of Jesus as water was poured over their hands in remembrance of renewal. Comments were made by the participants, and final documents were collected. I informed each participant that I would schedule a closing telephone interview. I thanked each one profusely and ended with prayer. *Healing Principles: Show Yourself Some Compassion; and we heal in community. God’s grace is sufficient for us and Christ’s power is made strong in our weakness. Resources for session six were as followed: Switch on Your Brain, Right Here, Right Now, Self-Compassion, Cultivating Wholeness, Called to Community, It Wasn’t Your Fault, and Search for the Beloved Community.*

Summary of Learnings

Ten persons signed commitment sheets to participate in the study. All ten are women, members of the context, and aged fifty – sixty-years. Five out of ten are married;

³³ bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 6.

1 of the ten is widowed; two are divorced and two are single. Two of the ten have PhDs, four have master's degrees, two have obtained bachelor degrees, and two have some college. Incomes range from \$60,000.00 to \$250,000.00. The women are professionals, very accomplished, gifted, and very involved in ministry in the church for the most part. They serve on boards, in ministries, and are in leadership positions in the church. Data was collected through several avenues, questionnaires, surveys, and journaling. A questionnaire was given at the end of each session. Four themes were analyzed from each questionnaire.

Four themes were tracked from each session. Themes tracked from session two involved physical self-image, emotional self-image, social self-image and spiritual self-image. Responses show that overwhelmingly participants have a positive self-image. Fifty to sixty percent had positive physical self-images (attractive, beautiful, fashionable, pretty, sexy, and shapely). Overwhelmingly, over seventy-five percent considered that their spiritual self-image, that of being confidence, devoted, sharing, caring for others, and thoughtful to be high.

The four themes tracked from session three are holding unforgiveness, trusting, anger and forgiveness. Sixty percent felt that the blessings/sin of the family impacted who they were; Seventy percent were carrying hurts that were not shared with anyone; and Fifty percent confessed to holding grudges. Seventy percent responded to having unforgiveness in the heart all the time or sometimes. On the subject of whether they wanted the perpetrator punished, sixty percent responded yes; and thirty percent responded no.

Trust was the next trend tracked as a trend. Seventy percent responded no to betraying confidences. Sixty percent admitted to making assumptions instead of asking questions. Fifty percent responded no to being close to only people like them. As far as trusting themselves, seventy percent responded that they do. It appears by the responses that more than fifty percent were close to people that were not like them.

When it comes to anger it appears that many cannot or will not or do not know how to deal with anger. From the responses, anger does not play a role in their emotions. Only one response submitted, (sometimes), angry inwardly. There was a good response for lying or withholding information, with an eighty percent total response: forty percent stating yes, and forty percent stating sometimes. Thirty percent do not show anger outwardly, and thirty percent sometimes show anger outwardly. One percent expressed that anger is shown outwardly.

Forgiveness is the next trend that was tracked. Responses were tracked to the questions/statements: can forgive one person, yet withhold forgiveness from another; freedom is a constant struggle; I am forgiven; practice forgiveness daily; want to move on; and willing to forgive when a boundary is innocently or unknowingly violated. Forty percent responded that they could withhold forgiveness and forgive. Thirty percent stated that freedom was a constant struggle. Seventy percent responded that they are forgiven. Only forty percent practice forgiveness daily. Eighty percent want to move on; and seventy percent are willing to forgive when a boundary is innocently or unknowingly violated. While the majority know that they are forgiven, many find it hard to forgive.

Session four was the session with the least number of attendees. This may be the reason for the skewed answers. Trends tracked under the theme of love are: what is love;

loving others; characteristic of love; and self-analysis of love. Eighty percent responded that they are loved and desire to be loved. Sixty percent stated that they are loved the way they want to be loved. Seventy percent loved themselves, fifty percent keeps promises to themselves, and sixty percent trust themselves. Surprisingly when it comes to loving others the trends were low. Less than fifty percent – responded yes to loving children, family, friends, God, and God's people and husband/significant others. The trend shows how love also received positive answers on availability and being accessible, fifty percent responded that this is how they show love.

Other ways listed of showing love were: being compassionate, cooking, gifts, hugs and kisses, and kindness did not receive any responses. Tracked trends of what participants believed were characteristics of love such as acceptance, authenticity, and compassion, integrity, showing grace, support, trust and truth. The characteristics of acceptance, compassion, and showing grace stood out as the most relevant, however, each received less than fifty percent response. The other characteristics listed did not receive any responses.

A self-analysis of areas that need more work in one's life tracked the trends: commitment, exercise/diet, health, patience, prayer, and self-esteem. Exercise/diet, health, patience and prayer received the most responses for areas that needed more work. One respondent listed not sure. Answers were also tracked to the questions: Are you happy? Do you criticize yourself? Do you make good decisions? Do you suffer from depression? Do you keep your word situationally depending on the person? Fifty percent responded that they were happy and that they made good decisions. Less than fifty percent responded that they engaged in self-criticism and suffered from depression.

Seventy percent responded that the situation did not impact on whether they kept their word.

Trends tracked under the theme of healing and purpose included: brokenness, soul scars, healing and purpose. Under brokenness the questions asked were: Are you in denial about anything in your life? Are you your authentic self? Do you seek validation from others? Do you wear a mask? Would you change how you live your life? Would you change who you are? One person responded yes that she was in denial about something in her life. Four responded that they were sometimes in denial about something in her life, and four responded no. One person omitted the question.

In terms of being the authentic self, there are seven yes responses, two sometimes, and one no. Fifty or fifty percent seek validation from others and another fifty percent responded no they do not seek validation from others. In response to the question, do you wear a mask, one person responded yes. Fifty percent or five answered, no, I do not wear a mask; and four responded sometimes. One person would change how she lives her life. Four would sometimes changes how she lives her life, and five or fifty percent would not change how she lives her life. Nine or ninety percent responded that they would not change who they are. One responded that she would sometimes change who she is.

With regards to soul scars the questions asked were: Are you addicted to tumult, division or upheaval? Are you offended? Are you angry? Do you often rage? Do you suffer from some form of abuse, emotional, physical or verbal? Do you think of yourself as a victim? A revelation is that there were ten (10) no responses to the first question regarding addiction to tumult, division or upheaval. Only two responded to the question about offense, and the responses were sometimes. One person responded that they were

angry (yes); three responded sometimes; six persons elected not to respond to this question. One person responded that they often rage; three persons responded that they sometimes rage; six persons chose not to respond to the question. Eighty percent responded that they suffered from some form of abuse, emotional, physical or verbal. Two persons chose not to respond to the question. None of the participants responded to the question concerning being a victim.

The next trend tracked was that of healing. Responses were requested on the areas: accept forgiveness, active prayer life, desire to be healed and whole, have the power to live in forgiveness because of the gifts of grace, I hear God's voice, and want to love as Christ loves. Eighty percent responded that they accept forgiveness; twenty percent, sometimes. Seventy percent responded that they had an active prayer life. Eighty percent feel that they have the power to live in forgiveness because of the gifts of grace. Sixty percent responded affirmatively that they hear God's voice, another forty percent responded that they hear God's voice sometimes. One hundred percent of the participants want to love as Christ loves.

Several open-ended questions were asked to track purpose. They are: what story affects the meaning of my life; what matters to you today; what new choices do I have to make; what do I have to offer the world; where do my gifts intersect with the greater good; and how would engaging the gift(s) add meaning to my life. Ninety percent responded with a story that affects the meaning of their life. Responses to what matters today included:

- Desiring to be of service to God and to others
- Having a closer relationship with God

- To hear God
- To align more with God's purpose for my life, health and wellness
- The importance of living in the moment
- Having more meaningful experiences
- Opportunities for family and friends
- Time matters more today
- Taking care of myself and doing things that are fulfilling
- Decreasing stress and being a positive person
- Taking care of myself.

Responses to what new choices I have to make included:

- I must choose to forgive others
- I must choose to love and care for myself
- I must remember that I have a choice
- The choice to surrender all to God
- I must choose to pray for more faith
- I must choose to let God and get out of the way.

Responses to new choices I must make are to align my gifts with my calling include: I must choose good eating habits and to walk at least 3 – 5 miles, five days per week. I must make the new choice to manage my time. I choose to pray more. Responses to the thought, what do I have to offer the world include: friendship, working with underserved communities to create transformative change, my writing, my gift of compassion and technical writing, the gift of encouragement and working with persons who need high school diplomas, uplift, compassion and caring.

According to this project the seven pathways necessary to promote a healing journey are Scripture, in this case Luke 13:10-17, Self-Esteem/Self Awareness and The Imago Dei, Forgiveness, Love, Mindfulness, Storytelling, and Self-Compassion. The woman from Luke 13: 10-17 had a tremendous story to tell. Her voice echoed throughout the project. She was cited as being one of the impactful focal points by participants. In looking at the data, session questionnaires, survey and exit interview, the scripture was very impactful. The second pathway, *Self-Esteem/Self-Awareness and the Imago Dei*, is vital to healing because it allows us to take inventory of who we are, how we see ourselves, and to relate how God sees us. This pathway invited us to see others through God's eyes, those we may despise, put down, look down upon, or judge. Seeing oneself through the eyes of God was very impactful and learning experience for the participants.

The third pathway, *Mindfulness*, proved to be an eye opener for the participants. Some had prior knowledge of what mindfulness entailed, but few realized the concept of Christian Mindfulness. Few connected God to every aspect of their lives. The lesson learned was to ask the question, God, what are you doing or saying to me at this moment. The fourth pathway is *Forgiveness*. This is the elephant in the room as most of the participants wrestled with being in various states of unforgiveness. The pathway of forgiveness points out that as long as we harbor unforgiveness in our hearts we are wounded. The bible points out that if we have anything against another we cannot ask for forgiveness from our Father. Forgiveness proved to be the most impactful element of the study. Many testified to having issues with family members, friends, others who had wronged a loved one. It was made clear that forgiveness does not mean forgetting; and this was a breakthrough for some.

The fifth pathway is *Love*. Love is so important to the healing process. Bearing hatred, wrath and ill will in the heart affect the entire body. God loves us in spite of us. If God can love us, then we ought to be able to love the other, but first we must love ourselves. The two greatest commandments proposed by Jesus contains the word Love. Criteria for that love was not stipulated, we are just told to love. When it comes to how and in spite of, we need to lean on the Holy Spirit. The sixth pathway on the journey to healing is *Storytelling*. The act of telling and hearing story was impactful for one hundred percent of the participants. Participants were allowed to tell her story without interruption. The telling of story was received as being very therapeutic for the group. Everyone expressed the balm that the stories provided. Hearing someone else's story lets me know that we may have singular experiences, but we all have had human experiences.

The seventh pathway on the journey to healing is that of *Self-Compassion*. In a world that spews constant judgement, ridicule, and contempt, we often think we must mirror that behavior. Christians combat evil in various ways, such as prayer, worship, fellowship, study, but the press weighs us down and sometimes we find ourselves lacking compassion and empathy. Self-compassion reminds us to be kind and forgiving and tolerant of ourselves. It reminds us that as we give out to others, the job, family, church, and community, we must take the time for self-care. It reminds us to treat ourselves as we would our best friend, of course, if that is a positive relationship. Many participants expressed self-compassion, and self-care as practices they hoped to continue. Participants overwhelmingly conceded they had experienced healing from issues they were conscious of; issues they had buried in the past; and issues from which they thought they had overcome.

I recommend the small group setting. The small group setting was a plus and different from the initial number of twenty or more for the desired group. A larger group consisting of more than ten members would prove to be problematic because of the intimacy required for this type of setting. I recommend a staged and intimate setting. The setting was important to the project. I designed a warm and intimate setting, not sterile with candles, music and textiles, to create an inner sanctum feeling. The outcomes of the process clearly supported the hypothesis that if women gather in a sacred and safe space and share story and traverse certain pathways, it would lead to healing.

From the responses of the participants, the short time frame (six weeks) impeded on the process. Some wrote that it should have been longer. Each session contains a lot of information. I recommend a longer program schedule when it can be accomplished. A ten week program might enable participants more time to grasp the principles. Participants indicated that they would have liked more time spent on various subjects. I recommend this study for various groups, men, youth, and young adults in any denomination, even secular groups. Overwhelmingly, the group answered, yes, this project should be implemented in the church, and that it would benefit many others in the congregations.

Attitude coming into any program serves as a determinant for what you will get out of it. The Six Engagement attitudes are very important. The seven pathways are agents within themselves; however, the seven attributes listed earlier also can serve as enhancers or inhibitors if lacked. Sub topics such as naming the problem, reframing the history, dealing with shame, how offense impact our lives, judgment, secrets, trauma, honesty, childhood impact, supported the lessons from the seven pathways.

Conclusion

To experience the healing of broken pieces and soul scars through a shared journey of pathways requires openness, expectations, and honesty, transparency and faith. The data overwhelmingly supported the hypothesis that in this type of setting, sacred and confidential, using a specific set of ideas and theories, that healing would take place. Because we were in the moment, some of the discussion points, which were verbal, were not written down. However, anecdotal information was captured by the facilitator. The participants left the sessions wanting more, and realizing the many ways that the past six weeks had changed their lives. The information was new for some and not new for others, but it was presented in a new way. God worked in a miraculous, healing way because He saw into the heart of each person present. Data collected from each of the sources after each session revealed that naming the problems was something many had avoided doing in their lives.

The one thing I would do differently is to develop some way to keep the group in tack. I suggested to them that they remain connected somehow. Perhaps, I will instigate some way to keep them connected. Many expressed the idea that they would like to remain together and see themselves as a Beloved Community because of their shared experience. They also expressed that they would not like to become a part of another group if created because of the “walk they have taken together.” While the process is not clinical therapy, it did provide an atmosphere for sharing and verbalizing. Healing what ails us has become more than just dealing with the physical body. Across disciplines, it is now known that the entire person must be healed. The mind, body and soul are impacted by all that assails us. If the body is hurt, so is the mind and the soul; if the mind is hurt, so

is the body and the soul; and if the soul is hurt, so is the mind and the body. The ten people who embarked on this journey began one way and ended another. Anyone desiring to begin a project on healing should 1) first look to the Word of God, 2) Look around in your context, ask God to show you the brokenness, and 3) Ask God what is needed to heal the brokenness. 4) Pray for the persons whom God has placed on your heart. 5) Find constructive ways to gather persons together, and 6) Connect with others.

Throughout God's Word we find scriptures that pertain to healing, health, wellness of mind, body and soul. We must not ever think that we are past suffering. We must never think that a state of complacency is pleasing to God. We must continue to support each other, and lift one another up. We must be a community. A group of women have been on a journey and now have much to share to create the critical mass. "Living in community, we find ways to cope with the gaps in our lives"³⁴, writes bell hooks. Her thoughts on community and its importance to our recovery are spelled out,

Now, I am more confident that community is a healing place. As the black women come together with one another, with all the other folks in the world who are seeking recovery and liberation, we find the will to be well affirmed, we find ways to get what we need to ease the pain, to make the hurt go away. Some of us are more involved in structured recovery programs, in intense ongoing therapy, others of us do a lot of "home psychoanalysis" (my term for the therapy that friends, comrades and loved ones can do together daily). We are all discovering that the experience of community is crucial to wellness.³⁵

Ultimately, healing comes out of shared experiences. When the Ubuntu consciousness of unity and generosity of spirit is present, an awareness of interconnection occurs. The

³⁴ bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam: Black women and Self-Recovery*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 114 – 115.

³⁵ bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam: Black women and Self-Recovery*, 114 – 115.

project reemphasized the interconnectedness of body, mind, and spirit, and the interconnectedness of individual, family and communal relationships. Broken pieces may be repaired in all of our interconnectedness. Every positive action, thought and word connects us to God. The group reconnected with God in positive ways.

As a result we are able to greet each other like the writer of the book, 3 John 1:2, “Dear friend, I’m pray that you may enjoy good health, and that all may go well with you even as your soul is getting along well. (NRSV)

APPENDIX A
INFORMATIONAL FLYER

Broken Pieces and Soul Scars of Women: Pathways to a Shared Model of Healing



- *If* you have a story to tell
- If you have a desire to help others
- If you want to listen and to hear
 - If you are lonely in a crowd
- If you want to be your authentic self
- If you want a better understanding of the power of forgiveness
 - If you need a reawakening in your soul
- If you need to let go of things from the past, but don't know how

Then join us as we journey through our own Broken Pieces and Soul Scars - to ***MINDFUL TRANSFORMATION***. Pathways will provide valuable lens through which we may view and experience healing, empowerment and wholeness. We will address the uniqueness of each individual woman, through the eyes of God, in a sacred and confidential space. Sessions will be ninety minutes (1.5 hours) long. Pathway topics include:

Mindful ***Spiritual Reframing***
Mindful ***Forgiveness***

Mindful ***Godly Image***
Mindful ***Storytelling***

Mindful ***Self-Love***
Mindful ***Purpose***

This awesome experience may help us have a deeper understanding of ourselves. We will begin to discern how life's experiences have helped to shape our personalities and behaviors. This journey will help to reinforce, reshape and renew our relationships with God, ourselves and others.

This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study while deciding to participate. This study is being conducted by researcher Cheryl Coleman Hall, who is a Doctor of Ministry degree candidate at United Theological Seminary.

Six sessions will be held. Sessions will begin on Monday, June 10 and end on July 8, 2019. The sessions will last for ninety (90) minutes.

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APPENDIX B
ORIENTATION PACKAGE

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PARTICIPANT WELCOME LETTER

Hello Dear Research Study Participant,

I hope this note finds you well in spirit, body, and mind. Thank you so very much for agreeing to participate in the six week focus group for my action research project. The project is required for the completion of the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. My area of focus is on women. My ministry is about empowerment and wholeness of persons. I believe that we have been created with unbelievable gifts. Gifts of creativity of mind and body, and gifts of communication.

The Holy Spirit equips us with the confidence, tenacity and ability to do great things. Great things, not as a society might define them, but great things in the sight of God. Sometimes though because of the weight of the world we may get a little sidetracked, a little worn, a little tired.

Broken Pieces and Soul Scars of Women: Pathways to a Shared Model of Healing is designed to provide a template or guide for a women's circle. A circle of sisterhood, sharing, and support. I am encouraged that as we partake on this journey together, many marvelous and wondrous things will happen, will be revealed, and will restore. Dr. Martin Luther King advocated for a beloved community, one of his most compelling visions. A community in which people of different backgrounds recognize that we are all interconnected and that our individual well-being is inextricably linked to the well-being of others.

Again, thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. We will begin on _____ at the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, at _____. Your commitment to being present is vital. All personal information is confidential. Names will not be shared.

"The hunger I hear about over and over from my students, friends, and neighbors is a hunger to live the real life that I'm living right here, right now. Not the life that happened yesterday as I replay a conversation over and over in my head. Not the life that will happen tomorrow as I anticipate a crammed day. Not the edited life that I project online. This is a hunger to live deeply and truly, to know and inhabit our own lives, to be at home in our lives right now." Amy Oden, author The Practice of Christian Mindfulness, and Church History Professor.

Cheryl Coleman Hall
Doctoral Candidate, United Theological Seminary

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Doctor of Ministry project, *Broken Pieces and Soul Scars of Women: Pathways to a Shared Model of Healing*, where Cheryl Coleman Hall is the researcher is an action research study. Participants in this study will not be compensated financially.

This study is not intended to provide psychological, therapeutic, financial, or legal or other professional services.

The study will serve as an impetus for participants to share their stories with the hope that one can learn from and teach the other.

If expert assistance or counseling is needed the services of a competent professional should be sought.

I acknowledge receipt and accept the provisions of this letter of intent.

Participant's Name (Please Print)

Participant's Signature

Date

**DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT
PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT**

I have agreed to be a participant in the action research project: *Broken Pieces and Soul Scars of Women: Pathways to a Shared Model of Healing*, where Cheryl Coleman Hall is the researcher. The group will be comprised of women who will embark on a series of pathways to discovery and recovery in a group/circle environment. The research project is a ministry and not to be confused with clinical therapy. The project is to be conducted in a safe and sacred environment where confidentiality is crucial.

I understand that, as a participant, I may see, hear, or be exposed to confidential information about other participants, such as trying events in their lives. All information will be regarded as confidential.

I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to respect the privacy and confidentiality of this information. I will not access, use, or disclose any confidential information outside of this Group's environment.

This agreement will serve as an oath of your trustworthiness.

Participant's Name (Please Print)

Participant's Signature

Date

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT ATTENDANCE COMMITMENT

The Doctor of Ministry Project is an action research study. All data collected, whether verbal or audio, written or heard belongs to the researcher.

Names of participants will not be used. It is imperative that participant is committed to attending all sessions if possible.

Because of the nature of the study and the confidentiality and privacy required, and intimacy of the group setting, call-ins will not be allowed.

All persons will be required to sign confidentiality statements.

I understand the importance and nature of the project and commit to being present for all of the sessions unless there is an emergency.

Name (Please Print)

Signature

Date



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Implied Consent Letter for Surveys

Dear _____,

You are invited to participate in a study of _____.
 I hope you learn _____. You were
 selected as a possible participant in this study because _____.

If you decide to participate, please complete the enclosed survey. Your return
 of this survey is implied consent. The survey is designed to _____.
 It will take about _____.

No benefits accrue to you for answering the survey, but your responses will be
 used to _____. Any discomfort or inconvenience to you
 derives only from the amount of time taken to complete the survey.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be
 identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future
 relationships with _____. If you decide to
 participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without
 prejudice.

If you have any questions, please ask. If you have additional questions later,
 contact _____.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Spirit Led, Renewing the Church!

APPENDIX C

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT PRE-SURVEY

**DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT
PRE SURVEY**

Date: _____

Why have you come? What are your expectations? List three things.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What has been your general experience with the church's engagement in support of women and their lives, around issues of self-esteem?

List three things you would hope to take away from this study.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

APPENDIX D

SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**Respond to each question by checking yes or no**

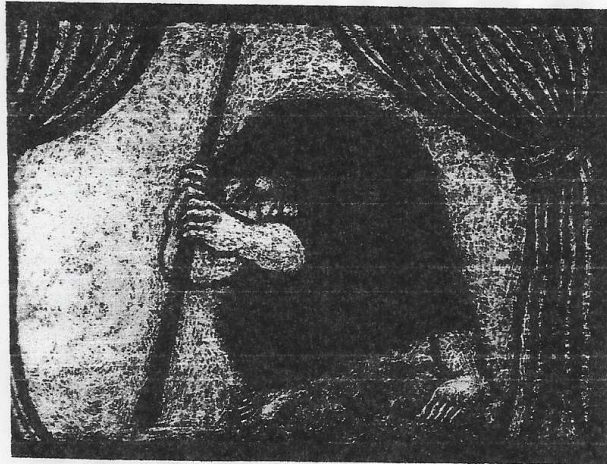
	YES	NO
I think that I am beautiful all of the time	-----	-----
I think that I am beautiful some of the time	-----	-----
I think that I am beautiful most of the time	-----	-----
I believe that God loves me all of the time	-----	-----
I believe that God loves me some of the time	-----	-----
I believe that God does not love me most of the time	-----	-----
I have had loving relationships	-----	-----
I have been in abusive relationships	-----	-----
I am still looking for someone to really love me	-----	-----
I believe in God	-----	-----
I question whether God really exists	-----	-----
I hate being black	-----	-----
I hate being Black because of how the world views Black people	-----	-----
I would like to be some other race	-----	-----
I would really like to be white	-----	-----
Is straight hair better than not straight hair	-----	-----
I am afraid most of the time	-----	-----
I am afraid some of the time	-----	-----
I am afraid all of the time	-----	-----
I often feel imperfect	-----	-----
I love myself	-----	-----
I hate myself	-----	-----
I have accomplished much	-----	-----
I have not accomplished much	-----	-----
I would like to be like someone else	-----	-----
I would like to be someone else	-----	-----
I am happy some of the time	-----	-----
I am happy most of the time	-----	-----
I don't trust others	-----	-----
I trust others	-----	-----
I had a good upbringing	-----	-----
I did not have a good upbringing	-----	-----
I had a good childhood	-----	-----
I have had mean things done to me	-----	-----
I have not experienced many mean things	-----	-----
I have been verbally abused	-----	-----
I would change something(s) about myself	-----	-----
I would change my skin color	-----	-----
I would change my weight	-----	-----

I would change my eye color	-----	-----
I don't always tell the truth	-----	-----
I most always embellish my statements	-----	-----
I don't feel good about myself	-----	-----
I don't feel loved	-----	-----
My mother loved me	-----	-----
I don't feel as if my mother loved me	-----	-----
I have a hard time loving others	-----	-----
I long for more	-----	-----
I am never satisfied	-----	-----
There are some things about me that others don't know	-----	-----
I have secrets	-----	-----
I have sexuality issues	-----	-----
My father loves me	-----	-----
My father does not love me	-----	-----
I don't know my father	-----	-----
I grew up without a father	-----	-----
I have had a mentor	-----	-----
I have a mentor	-----	-----
I have someone I look up to	-----	-----
I like myself	-----	-----
I like to read	-----	-----
I like cooking	-----	-----
I like cooking for others	-----	-----
I often feel depressed	-----	-----
I look for the brighter side of things	-----	-----
I think women can help each other	-----	-----
I am proud of my ethnicity	-----	-----
Church has been a refuge	-----	-----
I enjoy belonging to a Church	-----	-----
I enjoy studying the Bible	-----	-----
I believe the Bible is the Word of God	-----	-----
I have experience disappointment in my life	-----	-----
I look for the brighter side of situations	-----	-----
I am strong-willed	-----	-----
I am quiet	-----	-----
I would like to be more assertive	-----	-----
I am an overcomer	-----	-----
I get angry easily	-----	-----
I cry easily	-----	-----
I laugh a lot	-----	-----
I like being me	-----	-----
I have peace	-----	-----
I am searching for peace	-----	-----
I have experienced prejudice and racism	-----	-----
I have experienced discrimination	-----	-----

APPENDIX E

PICTURE OF BENT OVER/CRIPPLED WOMAN

CRIPPLED WOMAN



Reference Luke 13:10-17

APPENDIX F
JOURNALING SUGGESTIONS

JOURNALING SUGGESTIONS

- 1. Write about a painful relationship.**
- 2. Journal an experience of loss and where God met you.**
- 3. Write a letter to your daughter or a young woman describing true beauty.**
- 4. Toxic waste is everywhere. Where have you dumped yours? Have others dumped on you?**
- 5. Describe a time when the waters were stirred in your life. Did you jump in the pool or run away?**
- 6. Describe a time when feelings of transplantation left you with more tears than joy.**
- 7. What makes you afraid?**
- 8. Write a poem about how you hear God's voice of approval.**
- 9. Where is that place of pain in your life, where God consoles you with a consolation that can bless and be a voice for others?**
- 10. Every relationship at some point may bring heartbreak. Write a fictional piece about how you imagine living a life full blast, full out, and full of love, even when there are moments of disappointment.**
- 11. Write about a time when you pushed back against negative talk, from within or without and was victorious.**

APPENDIX G

SESSION SIX CLOSING SURVEY

**DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT
BROKEN PIECES AND SOUL SCARS OF WOMEN: PATHWAYS TO A
SHARED MODEL OF HEALING
SESSION 6 CLOSING SURVEY**

Along this soul work journey, “Mindful Transformation” we have examined several areas and how they help our healing process of wholeness. These areas have been shame, trauma, and mindfulness being made in Christ’s Image, The Imago Dei, self-image (self-esteem), self-forgiveness, and journaling, self-love – healing through forgiveness, wholeness and community.

What I have learned most from the sessions.

How did hearing the stories of others help me?

How did telling my story help me?

Which topic(s) will aid more in my healing process to wholeness and why?

Have I grown closer to other participants in the study?

I feel that I am closer to wholeness that I was prior to beginning Mindful Transformation. If yes why, if no why?

Were the activities helpful in reflecting the lesson?

I will apply what I have learned to my life.

I would like to attend more sessions like these.

I think this soul journey would benefit others, men, young adults, and youth.

My soul scars are being healed as a result of my participation in this study and being with others.

What would you like to see done in our church to further engage in the support of women?

Have you a sense of community with the other participants in the course?

List three things you take away from this study.

1.

2.

3.

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